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THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
EURIPIDES.

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THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
EURIPIDES.

TRANSLATED
BY R. POTTER.

VOL. I.

OXFORD,

PRINTED BY W. BAXTER:

For G. and W. B. WHITTAKER; LONGMAN and Co.; BALDWIN and Co.;
T. HAMILTON; OGLE and Co; SIMPKIN and MARSHALL; and
R. PRIESTLEY: J. PARKER, Oxford: and DEIGHTON
and Sons, Cambridge.

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P R E F A C E.

THE pleasure which we receive from the admired writings of antiquity, in a manner allies our minds to the minds of the illustrious writers ; we contract a love for them, and interest ourselves in every circumstance that interested them. This affection, which arises from the love of excellence natural to the well-disposed mind, induces us to enquire after even the minutest particulars of their lives and fortunes ; and Homer, poor and blind, is not less the object of our attention than his hero Achilles. The life of a retired scholar cannot indeed be supposed to present us with great and striking events ; but it may convey more useful instructions, such as come nearer to our own business and bosoms ; it may encourage the man of genius to exert his talents so as to render himself agreeable and useful to his fellow-citizens, to procure their esteem while he lives, and to preserve his name from oblivion, so dreaded by the generous mind. Few of the great writers of ancient times have a juster claim to this attention than the virtuous, the modest, the amiable Poet, with whose remaining works the English reader is now presented.

The prodigious armament with which Xerxes invaded Greece is well known : when he was advancing towards Attica, to revenge the defeat of his father's forces at Marathon, the Athenians, by the advice of Themistocles, retired with their effects to Salamis,

Troezen, and Ægina. Among those who took refuge at Salamis were Mnesarchus and Clito, the parents of Euripides, who was born in that island on the very day in which the Grecians there gained that memorable victory over the Persian fleet. From the best authorities we learn, that his parents were persons of rank and fortune; particularly that his mother was of very noble birth; for no regard is due to Aristophanes, who spared no good man, and who hated Euripides. They educated their son with great attention, and at a considerable expence: besides the athletic exercises, in which he excelled, he was taught grammar, music, and painting; in this enchanting art he made a great proficiency, particularly in historical picture, and first designed the figure of Agamemnon at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the execution of which has rendered the name of Timanthes immortal. He now applied himself to the study of oratory under the refined and learned Prodicus, who admitted none to his school but the sons of great and noble families; the celebrated Pericles was also formed under this excellent master, who is well known from his elegant and instructive fable, the Judgment of Hercules, which some years ago was adorned with all the graces of English poetry; from this school Euripides derived that copious stream of eloquence which flows through all his writings, and which rendered him the poet of orators; Demosthenes was so sensible of his superior excellence in this, that he studied him with peculiar attention; Cicero held him in the highest estimation even to his last moments; for when those that murdered him came up to his litter, they found him reading the Medea of this author; and Quintilian recommends him to the real orator as a more useful model than either the sublime

and daring Æschylus, or the grave and majestic Sophocles. About this time Anaxagoras of Clazomene transferred the school of Thales from Ionia to Athens ; this truly great man exploded the doctrines of fate and chance, and acknowledging a God incorporeal, eternal, and of infinite wisdom, ascribed the creation of all things, motion, and order, to pure and perfect intellect : he seemed formed to enlighten the world, but the darkness was too thick to be dispelled by less than divine power ; an important truth, which Socrates soon after saw and acknowledged. The grave and contemplative mind of Euripides was peculiarly formed for these sublime enquiries ; he therefore no more attended the Gymnasium, but applied himself entirely to these studies under Anaxagoras, till this philosopher was accused of impiety for saying that the Sun was a burning mass of fire : Pericles generously defended his master, and by his eloquence and interest prevailed so far, that the sentence of death was softened to a fine and banishment. Euripides, perceiving the danger of attempting to emancipate reason from the slavery of received opinions, and unwilling to give up his studious course of life, turned his thoughts to the Drama, ambitious of some share of that glory which Æschylus had already acquired, and Sophocles was then acquiring. He was very young when he engaged in this undertaking, but he had every qualification which could ensure success : devoted from his early years to literature, educated under the best masters, conversant in the deepest philosophy and the sublimest studies, an exact observer of men and manners, tender and even melancholy in his disposition, alive to all the finest feelings of humanity, and uniformly virtuous in his life, as if Nature and Art had vied with each other to form

this excellent man, it is no wonder that he soon became the delight and ornament of his country ; and, what perhaps is a more solid honour to him, he contracted an early friendship with Socrates, who was twelve years younger than himself, and survived him almost six years ; this friendship, formed on the firmest principles of virtue and wisdom, and cemented by a similarity of manners and studies, continued indissoluble. These studies form the history of his life from the eighteenth to the seventy-second year of his age, during which time he composed seventy-five tragedies, frequently retiring to his native Salamis, and there indulging his melancholy muse in a rude and gloomy cavern. His reputation was now so illustrious, that Archelaus, king of Macedonia, invited him to his court : this monarch to his many royal virtues added a fondness for literature and the muses, and had drawn to him from Greece many who excelled in the polite arts, particularly those who were eminent for their learning, philosophers and poets. Euripides, after much and earnest invitation, at length complied with the king's request, and went to Pella, where he was received with every mark of esteem and honour. Archelaus knew how to value a man of modesty and learning, a lover of truth and virtue ; but he particularly admired the disinterestedness, the amiable candour, and gentleness of manners, which distinguished Euripides, and made him worthy of the liberality, the esteem, and affection of such a king. In this court at this time, among many other eminent men, were Agatho, an excellent tragic poet, an honest and agreeable man, a friend and admirer of Euripides, Timotheus the famous musician, and Zeuxis the celebrated painter : in this society Euripides lived happy, beloved, and honoured, and died lamented in

the third year after his coming to Macedonia, and the seventy-fifth year of his age. Archelaus mourned for him as for a near relation, buried him among the kings of Macedonia, and erected a magnificent monument to his memory. The news of his death was brought to Athens as Sophocles was about to exhibit one of his tragedies; he appeared in mourning, and made his actors come on the stage without crowns: this great poet had long been the intimate friend of Euripides; he was then in the ninetieth year of his age, and died about the end of this year. The Athenians immediately sent ambassadors to Archelaus, requesting his permission to remove the bones of Euripides into his own country; this the king and the Macedonians firmly refused; as they could not obtain his ashes, they raised a cenotaph to their poet in the way that led from the city to the Piræus.—The learned reader will not find, nor will he expect to find, any thing new in this short account; nothing can be added to the elaborate diligence of Dr. Barnes, but much may be retrenched.

Of the origin of the Greek Drama, and its perfection under the three great masters, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, enough has been said in the preface to the translation of Æschylus, where their comparative merit is stated and accounted for. Euripides was to Æschylus what ^a Raffaele was to Michael Angelo: in Æschylus all is inspiration; his genius is bold and fiery; his ideas are vast and sublime; his persons are a superior order of beings: Euripides owed more to study, but it was chiefly the study of nature; his genius is bright and glowing; his images are vivid and

^a See and admire the President's Discourse delivered in the Royal Academy, December 10, 1772.

deeply impressed ; his characters designed with propriety, and supported with dignity : but he is chiefly distinguished from all other writers by the purity and copiousness of his moral sentiments, and his irresistible power in moving the tender passions ; for the first he was indebted to his education under Prodicus and Anaxagoras, and his friendship with Socrates ; the latter he drew from his own heart ; what he felt warmly, he painted pathetically ; like our own Spenser,

He steep'd in tears the piteous lines he wrote,
The tend'rest bard that e'er impassion'd song.

If we may with reason and truth form this judgment of the drama of Euripides, we must be surprised and sorry to find a very respectable critic expressing himself in these words, “ Greek tragedies are more active than sentimental ; they contain many sensible reflections on morals, manners, and upon life in general ; but no sentiments except what are plain and obvious. The subjects are of the simplest kind, such as give rise to the passions of hope, fear, love, hatred, envy, and revenge, in their most ordinary exertions : no intricate nor delicate situation to occasion any singular emotion ; no gradual swelling and subsiding of passion ; and seldom any conflict between different passions. I would not however be understood as meaning to depreciate Greek tragedies. They are indeed wonderful productions of genius, considering that the Greeks at that period were but beginning to emerge from roughness and barbarity into a taste for literature. The compositions of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, must have been highly relished among a people who had no idea of any thing more perfect. We judge by comparison, and every work is held to be perfect that

has no rival. It ought at the same time to be kept in view, that it was not the dialogue which chiefly enchanted the Athenians, nor variety in the passions represented, nor perfection in the actors, but machinery and pompous decoration, joined with exquisite music. That these particulars were carried to the greatest height, we may with certainty conclude from the extravagant sums bestowed upon them: the exhibiting a single tragedy was more expensive to the Athenians than their fleet or their army in any single campaign.” *Sketches of the History of Man*, vol. i. p. 141.

Let it not be deemed pedantry, or an affectation of admiring the writers of ancient Greece, but impartial justice, to observe, that if the Greek tragedies were more active than sentimental, those great poets perfectly knew their province; for tragedy, as Aristotle^b defines it, is the imitation of an action. The simplicity of the subject constitutes one of their principal excellencies; and from that simple subject to give rise to the passions, is a proof of their power: whether these passions were called forth only in their most ordinary exertions, whether no delicate situation occasioned any singular emotion, whether there is no gradual swelling and subsiding of passion, no conflict between different passions, the English reader will be able to determine from reading any one of these tragedies, particularly the impassioned characters of Phædra and Medea, and probably will be enchanted with the dialogue and the variety in the passions represented. The age which produced, besides these tragic poets, Pindar, Simonides, Prodicus, Anaxagoras, the accomplished Pericles, Socrates, and

^b "Ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως, &c. Περὶ Ποιητικῆς, κεφ. 5'.

Δράμα enim dicitur, quia est μιμητικὸν ἐν τῷ δράν. Vossii Instit. Poetic. lib. ii. c. 1.

many other great men, could not be but beginning to emerge from roughness and barbarity into a taste for literature; Athens was rather at that time advanced to its highest perfection in all the polite arts: it is not a proof of the barbarism of that people, that they had no idea of any thing more perfect than the compositions of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; if it is, the barbarism yet remains. That the music which accompanied these tragedies was so exquisite as some imagine, “who have formed a romantic idea of ancient music upon the exaggerated accounts of its effects, which they have read in old authors,” will not be readily allowed; “with all the simplicity of their music, the poets themselves being able to set their own pieces, and to sing them so well to the satisfaction of the public, is to a perfect judge a certain proof that their music had not only fewer difficulties, but fewer excellencies than the modern.” Their machinery and decoration were indeed magnificent; but it must not be supposed that the exhibiting a single tragedy was more expensive to the Athenians than their fleet or their army in any single campaign; the authority of Demosthenes will probably be thought decisive; he says that the Athenians expended more money upon the Panathenæan and Dionysian feasts, than upon any one of their naval expeditions. In Philipp. I. The Panathenæa continued several days, and consisted of various entertainments, races both of men and horses, gymnastic exercises, musical contests, pyrric dances, a naumachium, pompous processions, and at the end a costly sacrifice, at which the whole assembly was feasted: dramatic exhibitions made but one part of these expensive shows, and in these each poet who

* Dr. Burney's Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients, p. 168.

contended for the crown, and many contended, was obliged to present three tragedies and a satiric piece : it might therefore be curious to calculate the expence of exhibiting a single tragedy, and probably it would come out much less than that of bringing a new play upon our stage.—Had these observations fallen from the pen of an obscure writer, they would have been suffered to sink in oblivion ; but the well-acquired reputation of the author of the *Sketches of the History of Man* makes it proper to take this notice of them.

The translator's attempt to present the tragedies of *Æschylus* to the English reader has been honoured with so candid and favourable a reception, that he is encouraged to offer *Euripides* also to the public ; the same care and attention have been applied, whether with equal success, the public will now judge. In *Æschylus* he found difficulties enough ; in translating *Euripides* he finds one of a peculiar nature, of which the best judges of writing will be most sensible : the sublime and daring imagination of the former, expressed in the strongest and most vivid glow of colouring, animates and inspires ; but in *Euripides* there is much of what the ancient critics called *λαλιον*, *tenui oratione et scripturâ levi*, yet sweet and delicate through the melody and rythmus of the Greek language, and the poet's wonderful skill in the structure of his words, in which he was so elaborately curious, that sometimes he did not compose more than three verses in three days : this simple unraised style has given the translator the most trouble of any part of this poet's works, and probably he will please least where he has laboured most ; yet, though he found it impossible to equal the melody of the original, he did not think it allowable to attempt to elevate its simplicity ; for in such cases

those who are most capable of judging will think that nimium quod est offendit vehementius, quam id quod videtur parum.

In deference to the opinion of some persons, who want notes as little as the translator likes to deform his page with them, some few notes are here subjoined. With regard to these, considering the various readers an English book may have, who will prescribe the proper measure? what is enough? what is not too much? Annotations are not properly the province of the translator, but of the critic; and great are his services to literature; to the acumen of Valckenaer, to the extensive learning, the solid judgment, and the amiable candour of Markland, the admirers of Euripides are greatly indebted; they have done much, but much yet remains to be done.

The translator feels, and most gratefully acknowledges, the honour done him by many persons of the greatest eminence both in station and learning. He wishes that the translation may be found in some degree to merit this generous encouragement; he can only say, that it is not negligently done, and that it is at least faithful; it may give an agreeable and a rational amusement to the English ladies, whose education does not generally lead them to an acquaintance with the Greek language; and an endeavour to revive the manly simplicity of the ancients cannot be unuseful to any persons in any age.

SCARNING,

April 2, 1781.

THE
BACCHÆ.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

BACCHUS.

TIRESIAS.

CADMUS.

PENTHEUS.

AGAVE.

OFFICER.

MESSENGERS.

CHORUS OF ASIATIC BACCHÆ.

THE BACCHÆ.

THIS tragedy is of a singular nature, and very different from any thing that remains to us of the Athenian theatre: the best critics have ranked it among the finest tragedies of Euripides; and in respect of its composition it is so; but to us it is the least interesting of any of them; for we cannot so far assume the prejudices and sentiments of a Grecian audience as to be affected with a story of their Bacchus and his frantic Mænades; yet we can be sensible to fine writing, and the distress of Cadmus and Agave in the last scene is touched with a masterly hand. But it is peculiarly valuable for its learning, as it gives us the best account now extant of the Orgies of Bacchus; those rites, even to the dress and manners of the Bacchæ, are so particularly described, that later and even cotemporary writers seem to have taken their accounts of them from hence; so that it would be an absurd affectation to burden the page with unnecessary notes. The first choral Ode is truly tragic in the original acceptation of the word, and not only remarkable for the elegance of its composition, but precious as a religious relic, all that remains to us of those songs in honour of Bacchus, from whence tragedy derived its origin and its name: the religious air, with which it is prefaced, gives it a solemnity, and in a manner hallows the whole drama.

P. Brumoy is inclined to think, that this tragedy partakes something of the satiric piece, if it be not altogether one, as well as the Cyclops ; but without reason : he judges better when, from the subject and the turn of most of the scenes, he conjectures it to be a sacred tragedy, and to have been exhibited during the jollity of the feast of Bacchus. This was a time which demanded the attention of the moral poet, as the festivity was now corrupted with much licentiousness and debauchery : ever true to the cause of virtue, he not only inculcates an awful reverence of the gods, but endeavours to call back his countrymen to that decorum, that chastity and sobriety, which the god required, and which had been so shamefully violated : the Athenian stage, under the conduct of Euripides, pleaded the cause of religion and morality as warmly and as eloquently as the schools of the philosophers.

One is surprised to find that Euripides concludes five of his tragedies with the same words : however naturally the reflection might arise from the subject of the other four, it does not seem to be pertinent to this ; the proper moral of which is, as it was expressed by Cadmus on the death of Pentheus,

If there be

A man, whose impious pride contemns the gods,

Let him behold his death, and own their pow'r.

The scene is at Thebes, before the vestibule of the palace of Pentheus.

THE BACCHÆ.

v. 1—28.

BACC. **N**OW to this land, the realms of Thebes, I come,
Bacchus, the son of Jove, whom Semele,
Daughter of Cadmus, 'midst the lightning flames
Brought forth; the god beneath a mortal's form
Concealing, on the brink of Dirce's fount,
And where Ismenus rolls his stream, I tread.
I see my mother's tomb rais'd near the house
In which she perish'd by the thunder; yet
Its ruins smoke, th' ætherial fire yet lives,
The everlasting mark of Juno's hate
Wreck'd on my mother. Cadmus hath my praise,
Who to his daughter rais'd this shrine, the ground
Hallow'd from vulgar tread; the clust'ring vine
I gave to wreath around its verdant boughs.
Leaving the Lydian fields profuse of gold,
The Phrygian, and the Persian plains expos'd
To the sun's rays, and from the tow'ring forts
Of Bactria passing, from the frozen soil
Of Media, from Arabia the blest,
And all that tract of Asia which along
The salt sea lies, where with Barbarians mix'd
The Grecians many a stately-structur'd town
Inhabit, to this city, first of Greece,
I come, here lead my dance, my mystic rites
Establish here, that mortals may confess
The manifest god. Of all the realms of Greece
In 'Thebes I first have rais'd my shouts, thus cloth'd
With a fawn's dappled hide, and in my hand

Thy thyrsus hold, this ivy-wreathed spear :
For that the sisters of my mother (least
Becomes it them) declared that not from Jove
I sprung, but pregnant by some mortal's love
That Semele on Jove had falsely charg'd
Her fault, the poor device of Cadmus ; whence
They arrogantly said that Jove enraged
Slew her, because she falsely urged his love
As her excuse : for this my madd'ning stings
Impell'd them to forsake the house, and roam
Distracted o'er the mountain, where perforce
They wear the habit of my orgies. All
The females, who from Cadmus draw their birth,
Have I driv'n frantic from their houses forth ;
And with the sons of Cadmus mix'd beneath
The dark-green firs, whose boughs o'er-roof the rocks,
They sit. This city must be taught to know,
Howe'er averse, that with my mystic rites
She is not hallow'd ; and that I defend
The cause of Semele, to mortal men
Avow'd a god, the son of thund'ring Jove.
Cadmus his honours and imperial state
Resigns to Pentheus, from his daughter sprung :
He with profane contempt against me wars,
Drives me from the libations, in his vows
Deems me not worthy mention : for which cause
To him, and all the Thebans, will I shew
Myself a god. Things well appointed here,
Hence to some other realm will I remove,
And shew myself : but should the Theban state
In rage attempt with hostile arms to drive
My Bacchæ from their confines, I will head
My Mænades, and lead them to the fight.
For this have I put off my godlike form,
Taking the semblance of a mortal man.
But you, my frolic train, who left the heights
Of Tmolus, Lydian mount, ye female troop,
Whom from barbaric coasts I led with me

Associates, and attendants on my march,
 Resume your Phrygian timbrels framed by me
 And mother Rhea, 'round the royal house
 Of Pentheus, let their hoarse notes roar, that Thebes
 May see you. To Cithæron's heights I go,
 And with my circling Bacchæ join the dance.

CHORUS.

PROSODE. From Tmolus, whose majestic brow
 Views Asia stretching wide below,
 Light my frolic steps advance,
 And to Bacchus lead the dance;
 An easy, pleasing task, whilst high
 Swells to the god the voice of harmony.
 Is there who comes along the way?
 Are there who in their houses stay?
 Hence, begone, whoe'er you are.
 To hallow'd sounds let each his voice prepare.
 The song to Bacchus will I raise,
 Hymning in order meet his praise.

STRO. I. His happy state what blessings crown,
 To whom the mysteries of the gods are known?
 By these his life he sanctifies;
 And, deep imbibed their chaste and cleaning lore,
 Hallows his soul for converse with the skies,
 Enraptur'd ranging the wild mountains o'er;
 The mighty mother's orgies leading,
 He his head with ivy shading,
 His light spear wreath'd with ivy-twinc,
 To Bacchus holds the rites divine.
 Haste then, ye Bacchæ, haste,
 Attend your god, the son of heaven's high king;
 From Phrygia's mountains wild and waste
 To beauteous-structur'd Greece your Bacchus bring.

ANT. I. Him, as the pangs of child-birth came,
 Whilst all around her flash'd the lightning's flame,
 Untimely did his mother bear,
 Then in the thunder's vollied blaze expire.
 But fav'ring Jove, with all a father's care,

Snatch'd his loved infant from the blasting fire,
 And, hid from Juno's jealous eye,
 Clos'd the young Bacchus in his thigh,
 And round the golden cincture clasp'd
 Till the destin'd months elaps'd,

Then gave the god to light,
 His horned head with dragon-wreath entwin'd:
 Hence on their savage-nursing height
 The Mænades with these their tresses bind.

STR. 2. Illustrious Thebes, whose fost'ring arms
 Rear'd the young Semele's advancing charms,
 With ivy crown thy royal head,
 Bid the green Smilax all around thee bloom,
 And all around its clust'ring berries spread;
 The oak's fresh verdure, or the fir's dark gloom
 Before thee hold, and join our band;
 Soon shall dance each raptur'd land;
 And o'er thy spotted vestments throw
 Soft-wreathing wool as white as snow.

The wanton wands among
 Be hallow'd. To the mountain's craggy brow
 He leads his female train along,
 Who from their hands the useless distaffs throw.

ANTIS. 2. O ye Curetes, friendly band,
 You, the blest natives of Crete's sacred land,
 Who tread those groves, which, dark'ning round,
 O'er infant Jove their shelt'ring branches spread,
 The Corybantes in their caves profound,
 The triple crest high waving on their head,
 This timbrel fram'd, whilst clear and high
 Swell'd the bacchic symphony,
 The Phrygian pipe attemp'ring sweet
 Their voices to response meet,
 And plac'd in Rhea's hands:

The frantic Satyrs to the rites advance,
 The Bacchæ join the festive bands,
 And raptur'd lead the trieteric dance.

EPODE. Raptur'd, when from the heights descending,

His nimbly-bounding train attending,
 He rushes to the vales below,
 Whilst loose his spotted vestments flow,
 Pleas'd with the wild goat's offer'd blood,
 Its flesh undress'd his followers' food.
 To Phrygia's steeps, to Lydia's ridges high
 He leads, exulting leads his train,
 Whilst Evøe, Evøe, is the joyful cry,
 And, 'as they pass, through every plain
 Flows milk, flows wine, the nectar'd honey flows,
 And round each soft gale Syrian odours throws.
 But Bacchus, waving in his hand
 The torch that from his hallow'd wand
 Flames high, his roving Bacchæ leads,
 And, shouting as he nimbly treads,
 Flings to the wanton wind his streaming hair,
 And wakes the rapture-breathing air,
 Haste, ye Bacchæ, haste your flight
 From the gold-prolific height
 Of Tmolus haste your frolic train,
 And to Bacchus raise the strain;
 To the deep-toned timbrel's sound
 Evøe, Evøe shout around.
 Loud the Phrygian cries repeat,
 Whilst the flute, with accord sweet
 Breathing 'midst your sacred play,
 Bids your feet its notes obey,
 As with measur'd steps ye go
 To the mountain's craggy brow;
 Like the colt with wanton pride
 Bounding by its mother's side,
 Up the ridgy height advance,
 And to Bacchus lead the dance.

TIRESIAS, CADMUS, CHORUS.

TIRES. Who at the gates calls Cadmus from the house,
 Agenor's son, that Sidon's city left,
 And built the tow'rs of Thebes? Let him be told

Tiresias seeks him; wherefore I am come
 He knows, the compact which my age hath form'd
 With his maturer age, to take with him
 The thyrsus, the fawn's spotted skin to wear,
 And with the clust'ring ivy crown my head.

CADM. My honour'd friend, it joy'd me in the house
 To hear thy voice, for thine is wisdom's voice.
 Accountred with these ensigns of the god
 I come prepared; him, of my daughter born,
 Declared a god to mortals, it behoves me,
 Far as I may, to grace with highest honours.
 Where shall we form the dance? Where fix our foot?
 Where toss our hoary locks? Be thou my guide,
 Thy age conducting mine, for thou art wise.
 May I with foot unwearied through the night
 And through the day the lengthen'd measure lead,
 Shaking the thyrsus: for unactive ease
 Our age forgets.

TIRES. Like thee I feel new life,
 Youth springs afresh, and dares the pleasing toil.

CADM. Shall then my chariot bear us to the heights?

TIRES. That were not equal honour to the god.

CADM. Old as I am then I will lead thy age.

TIRES. The god shall lead us thither without toil.

CADM. Shall we alone to Bacchus lead the dance?

TIRES. We only judge aright; unwise the rest.

CADM. The heights are distant, hang thou on my hand.

TIRES. Give me thy hand; thus side by side we go.

CADM. It is not mine, a mortal born, to slight
 The gods, nor with irreverent eye to scan
 Their deity: th' instructions of our fathers,
 From earliest times deliver'd down, we hold;
 No argument shall shake them, though devised
 With all the subtlety of deepest thought.
 Some one will say, I reverence not my age,
 Joining the dance, my head with ivy wreath'd;
 But not distinctly did the god declare
 If the fresh youth should lead the dance, or those

Of riper years; from every age he claims
These common honours; none exempt, from all
This reverence is his due. But since this light
Thine eyes behold not, I will be to thee
A prophet, each occurrence to explain.
Pentheus, to whom the sceptre of these realms
I gave, Echion's son, with speed advances:
He looks aghast: what tidings doth he bring?

PENTHEUS, CADMUS, TIRESIAS, CHORUS.

PENT. After a casual absence from this land
Return'd I hear strange evils in the city;
That all our women, from their houses fled,
Pretending rites to Bacchus, wildly range
The tangled woods that shade the mountain's brow,
To welcome this new god, whoe'er he is,
And honour him with dances: in the midst
Stand goblets full of wine; whilst some apart
Fly to the lonely shades, in secret bow'rs
Their paramours embracing; their pretence,
The mystic worship of the Mænades;
But Venus in their rites hath greater share
Than Bacchus. Some I seiz'd; and these in bonds
The public prisons straitly guarded hold.
The absent from their heights will I dislodge,
Ino, and her who to Echion bore me,
Agave, and the mother of Actæon
Autonoe: these in chains of iron bound
Soon from their wicked revelry shall cease.
They say too that a stranger is arrived,
A cheat, a sorcerer, from the Lydian land,
His golden tresses waving from his head
In order'd ringlets, of a roseate hue,
The grace of love bright sparkling in his eyes.
He with the younger females all the day
Holds converse, all the night, mysterious rites
To Bacchus feigning. If beneath this roof
I catch him, he no more shall wave his wand

With ivy rattling, no more shake his locks,
 His head lopt off. This Bacchus he reports
 To be a god, whom Jove, he says, of old
 Sew'd in his thigh: but in the lightning's flames
 He perish'd with his mother, vengeance due
 For her false tale of Jove's connubial bed.
 Doth not this call aloud for punishment,
 This stranger's insolence, whoe'er he be,
 Affronting us with such rude outrages?
 And here's another wonder; I behold
 The seer Tiresias habited alike
 With the fawn's dappled skin; and Cadmus too,
 My mother's father, shake his bacchic wand,
 Sight ludicrous; nor, sire, can I approve
 To see your age of reason so devoid.
 Wilt thou not shake the ivy from thy head?
 Wilt thou not throw the thyrsus from thy hand?
 Thy counsel this, Tiresias; this new god
 To mortals introducing, wou'dst thou make him
 Observe the flight of birds, and from the flames
 Receive the hire: but that thy hoary hairs
 Protect thee, thou shou'dst sit in chains amidst
 These madding dames, for such pernicious rites
 Induced. To females when the joy of wine
 Flows round the festive table, I pronounce
 That in such orgies there is nothing good.

CHOR. O Piety! Reverest thou not the gods,
 Nor Cadmus, who the earth-born harvest sow'd?
 Son of Echion, why defame thy race!

TIRES.- A wise man, when he takes occasions fair
 To hold discourse, finds words that promptly flow
 To grace his argument. Thou hast a tongue
 As voluble as Wisdom, but thy words
 Have not her pow'r. (A dangerous citizen
 Is that audacious pealing orator,
 Who lacks discretion.) This new god, whom thou
 So in derision callest, shall be great,
 How great, I have not words t' express, through Greece.

There are two pow'rs, young man, to mortal life
 Of chief account; the goddess Ceres one,
 She is the Earth, call her by either name;
 With dry and solid aliment by her
 Is man sustain'd: of different nature comes
 This son of Semele the grape's moist juice,
 His own invention he on man bestow'd:
 This to unhappy mortals from their griefs
 Gives respite, with the flowing vine when fill'd,
 Gives sleep, and sweet oblivion of the cares
 Each day brings with it; a more healing pow'r
 No medicine boasts. He to the gods, himself
 Sprung from a god, is in libation pour'd,
 That mortals might through him enjoy the sweets
 Of life; yet thy rude tongue insultingly
 Derides him, in the thigh of Jove as sew'd.
 I will inform thee what this means: When Jove
 The new-born babe snatch'd from the lightning flames,
 And bore him to Olympus, Juno sought
 To cast him from the skies; t' elude her aims
 Jove, as a god, this artful plan devised:
 Part of the air, which round enrings the earth,
 He burst, and lodged the child an hostage there
 From Juno's angry efforts: but in time
 Men fabled that Jove lodged him in his thigh,
 Th'ambiguous phrase mistaking. But this god
 Hath a prophetic pow'r; his mystic rites
 Breathe much of inspiration; when he flows
 Abundant on the soul, his frantic train
 He forms to tell events of times to come.
 Nor shrinks he from the toils of Mars; in arms
 The close-rang'd squadrons he with wild dismay

311. The sense of the original, such as it is, depends entirely upon the *ὁμοιοφωνία* of the words *ἄμνος* an hostage, and *ὀμνός* thigh, which it is not possible to preserve in the translation: but the English reader may be assured, that he loses nothing but the sameness of sound in two words of very different signification.

Confounds and scatters, ere the lifted spear
Flashes with spear : from Bacchus springs this terror.
And thou shalt see him bounding o'er the rocks
Of Delphi, striking with his blazing torch
Its double-pointed cliffs, his bacchic wand
Shaking, and great through Greece. Believe my words,
And be persuaded, Pentheus: pride thee not
In thy imperial pow'r, thy rule o'er men,
Nor glory in thy wisdom, that vain thought
Is but the feverish sickness of the soul :
But in thy realms receive the god, and pour
The rich libations, join the bacchic train,
And crown thy head. No female he perforce
Hurries to wanton love; for to his nature
In all things decent modesty is dear :
Reflect on this: no woman in his rites,
Come she with chaste and sober mind, shall know
The soil of violation. Seest thou this?
When at the gates the thronging multitude
Stands round thee, and with high applause the name
Of Pentheus through the state is sounded wide,
It gives thee joy; and he, I ween, is touch'd,
When honour'd, with delight. With reverence then
Myself and Cadmus, whom thy taunts deride,
Will be with ivy crown'd, and join the dance,
An hoary pair; yet must we join the dance,
Nor war against the god, urged by thy words.
For thou art mad, and thy deep malady
No medicines, save these, have pow'r to heal.

CHOR. Thy words, old man, disgrace not Phœbus: wise
Art thou thus honouring Bacchus, the great god.

CADM. Well hath Tiresias counsell'd thee, my son;
Abide with us, no outrage to the laws,
For now thou fliest from us, 'midst thy boast
Of wisdom most unwise. Were he no god,
As thy bold words aver, let him from thee
Receive that title, and the glorious falsehood

Avow, as he was born of Semele;
 So shall she seem the mother of a god,
 On us devolving honour, and our race.
 Seest thou Actæon's miserable fate,
 Rent piecemeal by the ravenous dogs his hand
 Had cherish'd? For his skill he proudly vaunted
 More than Diana's in the woodland chace.
 Be warn'd, come hither: I with ivy wreaths
 Will crown thy brows: with us revere the god.

- PENT. Thou shalt not touch me, going as thou art
 To this wild riot, nor on me wipe off
 Thy folly: but this master of thy madness
 Shall feel my vengeance. Go, this instant go
 One of you, batter down, o'erturn the seat
 Where he observes the flight of birds; rend, crush,
 And make a general havoc; to the winds,
 The tempests, toss his crowns: so shall I gall him
 Most feelingly. Go you, retrace the haunts
 Of this lascivious, female-figur'd stranger,
 That 'mongst our women spreads a new disease,
 And with pollution stains the nuptial bed.
 If you can take him, bring him hither bound,
 That he may die, crush'd with o'erwhelming stones,
 And solemnize unpleasant rites at Thebes.
- TIRES. Wretch as thou art, thou know'st not what thou say'st,
 Thy reason fail'd before, but this is now
 Outrageous madness. Cadmus, let us go,
 And deprecate from him, harsh though he be,
 And from the state the vengeance of the god.
 Come thou with me, but take thine ivy wand,
 Try to be my support, I will be thine;
 Unseemly would it be for two old men
 To fall: thus let us go; the son of Jove
 Must be obey'd. O Cadmus, to thy house
 His rage bodes rage: this with a prophet's skill
 I speak not, but from circumstance; such meed
 Hath a fool's tongue, which vents his foolish thought.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Holy, by the gods rever'd,
 Holy queen, who joy'st to wave
 O'er the earth thy golden wing,
 Goddess, hear'st thou Pentheus rave
 With unhallow'd menacing?
 Are his taunts 'gainst Bacchus heard?
 'Midst Pleasure's train with beauteous garlands crown'd
 The Son of Semele delights t' advance,
 Delights to lead the festive dance,
 Pleas'd with the soft flute's dulcet sound;
 First of the gods he charms to rest
 The anguish of th' afflicted breast,
 When amidst the feast divine
 Sparkling flow the joys of wine,
 And o'er the ivy-shaded heads
 The balmy dews of sleep the goblet sheds.

ANTIS. 1. When the rude unbridled tongue
 Vents the mad and wayward thought,
 Vengeance is its destin'd end;
 But the soul with wisdom fraught
 Calms the life, and, Peace its friend,
 Holds its state securely strong.
 For, distant as they are, on mortal man
 The gods from their ætherial seats look down;
 And sober wisdom scorns to own
 The wily and presumptuous plan.
 Pride, that extends her aims too high,
 Soon sees her short-lived glories die;
 Nor the present blessings tastes,
 Whilst to great designs she hastes:
 Such to me man's state appears,

395. Who is the venerable goddess here invoked? Themida primo loco Chorus alloquitur, deinde Nemesis, quam deam a Smyrnæis alatum effingi solere tradit Pausanias. Heath. This is ill expressed, as the address is simple, and to Nemesis.

When Pride her structures vain on Madness rears.

- STRO. 2. Might I to Cyprus win my way,
 Where Venus holds her reign;
 And round her sprightly train
 The soul-subduing Lover disporting play!
 O that at Paphos I were laid,
 Careless beneath some fragrant shade,
 Where from an hundred mouths, through meads
 Which Spring's eternal verdure know,
 His rich train the barbaric river leads,
 And visiting the plants and flow'rs,
 Supplies the soft-descending show'rs!
 Or up Pieria's craggy brow
 Might I my footsteps bend,
 In whose enchanting soft retreats
 The Muses love to form their seats,
 Then to Olympus' hallow'd heights ascend!
 Place me, Bacchus, place me there,
 Smiling god of mystic pleasures,
 Where the Loves, the Graces where
 Tread in light fantastic measures;
 There, 'midst thy hallow'd train enroll'd,
 Thy orgies will I hold.
- ANTIS. 2. The god, who sprung from Jove's embrace,
 To joys the feast invites;
 Him smiling Peace delights,
 Wealth-giving queen, that rears youth's rising race.
 To rich, to poor, to high, to low,
 Free his impartial bounties flow,
 The sorrow-soothing joys of wine:
 Nor pleasing night, nor mirthful day
 Is his, who sullen scorns the gift divine,
 Whilst gloomy cares, and thoughts unblest,
 Roll dark'ning in his cheerless breast.
 But heav'nly Wisdom's sober ray,
 Beaming its influence wide
 Benign her votaries to illume,
 Shews, as it breaks the impious gloom,

The dangerous paths of violence and pride.
 But the vulgar thoughtless herd,
 By misguiding Folly led,
 Every false pursuit preferr'd,
 To destruction onward tread.
 Well it becomes our solemn strain
 This moral lore t' explain.

PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, OFFICER, CHORUS.

OFFIC. Thy presence, Pentheus, we approach, return'd
 Not unsuccessful from the chace by thee
 Injoin'd: no savage we pursued, but tame
 He fled not, nor unwilling gave his hands;
 Nor from his warm cheek chang'd the roscate bloom
 Through fear, but smiling yielded to be bound,
 And hither led, obedient to my will.
 Through reverence this I said, Not willingly
 I lead thee, stranger, but by the commands
 Of Pentheus, sent by him. The dames, O king,
 Seiz'd by thee, and confin'd, with chains of iron
 Bound in the common prison, are escap'd
 Far from thy sight, and to the hallow'd groves
 Win their free way: spontaneous from their feet
 The chains fell off, and of their own accord
 Back roll'd the opening gates, by mortal hands
 Untouch'd. With many marvellous pow'rs this youth
 Is come to Thebes. My office is discharg'd.

PENT. Bind his hands fast: entangled in the toils,
 Light as he is of foot, he shall not 'scape me.
 Yet not ungraceful, stranger, is thy form
 Charming the women, and for this thou comest
 To Thebes; thy length of hair, palæstic toils
 Denoting not, flows loosely round thy cheek,
 Awakening soft desires; and that fair skin
 Of cherish'd whiteness never felt the touch
 Of the sun's beams, but nurs'd in sheltering shades
 Aims with its beauty to enkindle love.
 But speak, inform me first whence is thy race.

- BACC. Without proud prelude plainly will I tell thee.
Of flow'ry Tmolus thou perchance hast heard.
- PENT. Its heights, I know, wind round the walls of Sardis.
- BACC. From thence I come, and Lydia is my country.
- PENT. Whence hast thou brought these mystic rites to Greece?
- BACC. Bacchus instructed us, the son of Jove.
- PENT. Have you a Jove there who begets new gods?
- BACC. No: but the Jove that here loved Semele.
- PENT. Taught he his mystic lore by night, or day?
- BACC. Seeing and seen; and gave his sacred orgies.
- PENT. What ceremonious rites have these among you?
- BACC. These to th' unhallow'd may not be reveal'd.
- PENT. What profit to their votaries do they bring?
- BACC. Thou may'st not hear, though worthy to be known.
- PENT. Well hast thou wav'd what is my wish to hear.
- BACC. The orgies of the god abhor the impious.
- PENT. The god was seen by thee: what was his form?
- BACC. E'en such as pleas'd him: this I order'd not.
- PENT. This too thy art hath wav'd, and told me nought.
- BACC. T' instruct the wise in wisdom argues weakness.
- PENT. Cam'st thou here first to introduce the god?
- BACC. These orgies each barbaric region holds.
- PENT. Less wise than the enlighten'd sons of Greece?
- BACC. In this more wise, though differing in their laws.
- PENT. Hold you these rites by night, or in the day?
- BACC. Chiefly by night; darkness creates an awe.
- PENT. This tempts and poisons female chastity.

502, &c. It may not be amiss to observe here, once for all, that in the most interesting and important scenes the dialogue is often thus broken into single lines, each speaker confining himself to his line, sometimes for a long continuance. It is difficult to conceive what grace this amœbean recitative had on the Athenian stage, but that it had some grace we may conclude from the frequent use of it by the three great writers of tragedy: to the English reader it is likely to have a different effect; yet the translator did not think himself at liberty to deviate from the manner of composition prescribed by his author. It will easily be conceived that these passages must have occasioned a peculiar difficulty and trouble; and where an English line is found less harmonious than the composer of it wishes it to be, he humbly hopes that it will be imputed not to his want of ear, but to the confinement he was under, and to his unwillingness to sacrifice sense to sound.

BACC. E'en in the day foul deeds are often found.

PENT. Thou must be punish'd for thy sophistry.

BACC. Thou for thy folly, impious 'gainst the god.

PENT. How bold is Bacchus, nor untrain'd in words !

BACC. What dreadful vengeance, say, wilt thou inflict ?

PENT. First will I clip those wanton-waving locks.

BACC. These locks are sacred, cherish'd to the god.

PENT. Deliver up that thyrsus from thine hands.

BACC. Take it thou from me: as the god's I bear it.

PENT. Imprison'd and in chains will I secure thee.

BACC. The god himself will free me, when I please.

PENT. When thou invok'st him 'midst his madding dames.

BACC. What now I suffer present he beholds.

PENT. Where is he? for mine eyes discern him not.

BACC. With me: but thy profaneness clouds thy sight.

PENT. Lay hold on him; for Thebes and me he scorns.

BACC. I strictly charge your folly, bind me not.

PENT. I charge you bind him; mine's the greater pow'r.

BACC. Nor life, nor light thou know'st, nor who thou art.

PENT. Yes, I am Pentheus, sprung from royal blood.

BACC. Thy name is rightly ominous of grief.

PENT. Begone: in chains secure him near the stalls

Where feed my horses; there in night's dark gloom

Let him abide; there let him lead the dance.

As for these women, whom he led with him,

Th' associates of his crimes, they shall be sold;

Or from the rattling cymbals will I check

Their hands, and at the loom keep them as slaves.

BACC. I will begone: for what necessity

Inflicts not, neither doth necessity

Compel to suffer. Bacchus, be assur'd,

Whom thou hast set at nought, will on thy head

Repay with vengeance these indignities:

For, injuring me, thou lead'st the god in chains.

CHORUS.

STRO. O thou, of Achelous' race divine,

Fairest of founts that lead

Their crystal-flowing streams through grove or mead,
Be ev'ry blessing, virgin Dirce, thine;

For in thy hallow'd wave

Oft joy'd the god his youthful limbs to lave.

Snatch'd from th' immortal lightning's blasting flame.

The thunderer in his thigh inclosed the boy,

Then shouted loud through joy,

"There, Dithyrambus, there securely lie,

"Thy full growth to no female womb to owe;

"Thus will I shew thee, thus to Thebes will shew,

"And Bacchus call thy name."

But thou, blest Dirce, dost his rites deny:

Why from thy crisp banks with disdain

Reject my garland-bearing train?

Why roll away with scorn thy flying tide?

Nay, by the purple grace that glows

Clust'ring beneath the rich vine's boughs,

Thy Bacchus shalt thou hail, thy boast, thy pride.

ANTIS. What rage, what rage doth Pentheus' bosom fire?

He from the dragon-brood,

That started from the ground, derives his blood;

Earth-born Echion was of old his sire:

Terrific are his frowns,

A monster, whom humanity disowns,

As fierce, as savage as the giant-race

That rear'd their impious arms against the sky.

Ah me! I soon must lie,

Seiz'd and dragg'd hence, in some deep dungeon bound,

Though priestess of the god: in iron chains

The leader of our choirs his pride detains,

Hid in some dreary place

Where night with all its horrors darkens round.

Seest thou, O Bacchus, his rude hand?

Seest thou thy consecrated band

Forc'd in th' unequal contest to engage?

In all thy golden-glowing bloom

Come from Olympus, Bacchus, come,

Thy thyrsus shake, and check his savage rage!

O Bacchus, Bacchus! dreadfully the earth
 Beneath us rocks: the house of Pentheus soon
 Shall sink in the convulsion: in the house
 Is Bacchus: bow with reverence to the god.

SEMIC. We bow with reverence: see the marble frieze
 Shakes on those pillars: Bacchus is within,
 Soon will he raise his cheerful-sounding cry.

SEMIC. Kindle th' ætherial lightning's blazing flame,
 Burn, burn the house of Pentheus.

SEMIC. Look, look there;

Seest thou that fire? Around the sacred tomb
 Of Semele the lightning-flames of Jove,
 In which she perish'd, unextinguish'd blaze.
 Fall prostrate on the earth, ye trembling dames,
 Fall prostrate, for our king is in the house,
 The son of Jove, and shakes it to and fro.

BACC. Barbaric dames, astonished with your fears, [*com. forward.*]
 Lie you thus prostrate? You perceive, I ween,
 That Bacchus from its firm foundations`shakes
 The house of Pentheus: but arise, revive
 Your drooping spirits, banish all your fears.

CHOR. Thou brightest glory of our bacchic rites,
 With transport I behold thee 'midst this gloom
 Which closes round my cheerless solitude.

BACC. What, sunk you in despair when I was sent
 As doom'd to lie in darkness and in chains?

CHOR. What could I but despair? For who should be
 My guardian, if on thee misfortune fell?
 How art thou free from his unhallow'd hands?

BACC. With ease I freed myself; no work of toil.

CHOR. Did not the tyrant bind thy hands in chains?

BACC. In that I sported with him: when he thought
 His chains to fasten on me, he nor bound
 Nor touch'd me, but was fed with empty hope.
 When he had dragg'd us to the stalls, to lie
 Imprison'd there, he found a bull, around
 His knees he fixed the bonds, and his cleft hoofs.
 Breathless through rage, till streams of sweat flow'd down

His limbs, and in despite he gnaw'd his lip:
 Near him I sate, and quietly look'd on.
 But Bacchus meanwhile coming shook the house,
 And in his mother's tomb awoke the fire:
 Soon as he saw it, thinking that his house
 Was all in flames, his hurrying step he bent
 Now this way, that way now, and call'd aloud
 For water; every slave was occupied
 In the vain toil. Quitting his own attempt,
 For me he thought escaped, he drew his sword,
 And rush'd into the house; but Bacchus there,
 I speak what I surmise, framed in the court
 A form of lucid air; on this he flew,
 And smote the phantom, me as he would kill.
 Nor ended here the vengeance; for the god
 Rent from its solid base the shatter'd house,
 And all was crush'd in ruin whilst he view'd
 My cruel chains. Now wearied with his toil
 He sheath'd his sword, vain mortal, 'gainst the god
 That dared to fight. I from their prison freed
 The Bacchæ, and of Pentheus reckless come
 To you. But to this portal will he haste:
 Methinks I hear the trampling of his feet:
 What will he say to this? But I will bear
 His pride with mildness, though he threaten high;
 For temperate anger well becomes the wise.

PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, CHORUS.

- PENT. And must I brook these insults? From the chains
 In which I bound him is the stranger fled.
 Ha! there he stands; what may this mean? and how
 Dar'st thou appear abroad before my house?
- BACC. Stop thy foot there, stand there, and curb thy rage.
- PENT. How hast thou fled thy bonds? how art thou here?
- BACC. Did I not tell thee one would quickly free me?
- PENT. Who? for thy tongue still frames some new discourse.
- BACC. He, who to mortals rear'd the elust'ring vine.
- PENT. This grace to Bacchus falsely hast thou charg'd.

BACC. Bar every gate of every tow'r around.

PENT. What, cannot then the gods o'erpass the walls?

BACC. O, thou art wise, save where it most behoves thee.

PENT. Where it behoves me most, I there am wise.

BACC. First listen to his words, and weigh them well,
Who from the mountains comes with tidings to thee.
We, be thou sure, will stay; we will not fly.

MESSENGER, PENTHEUS, BACCHUS,
CHORUS.

MESS. Pentheus, high sovereign of the Theban state,
Leaving Cithæron, on whose sacred head
The snow, that thaws not, whitens, I am come.

PENT. What are thy tidings? Aught of high import?

MESS. I saw the madding dames that from this land,
To frenzy fir'd, rove with unsandal'd foot;
And I am come to tell thee, and the state,
What wond'rous deeds, and more than marvellous,
They do. But I would know if I may speak
Of these with freedom, or with softer phrase
Must clothe th' unwelcome tidings; for I fear
Thy hasty spirit, king, thy rig'rous anger,
And all the monarch swelling in thy soul.

PENT. Speak freely, thou from me hast nought to fear;
Nor on the good shall my displeasure fall.
But the more dreadful are the deeds by thee
Related of these Bacchæ, with more weight
Shall my severest vengeance light on him,
Who to these arts allur'd our frenetic dames.

MESS. Now to the mountain summits had I led
My herds, as on the earth the orient sun
Shot his refreshing beams; when I beheld
Three bands of females, to Autonoe one
Obedient, to Agave one, thy mother,
The third to Ino: all were laid asleep;
Beneath them some had spread the boughs of pines,
Some with the leaves of oaks form'd on the ground
Their casual bed, all decently compos'd.

Thou wou'dst not say that goblets full of wine
Inflam'd their sense, or that the wanton pipe
Had led them to the lonely shades to court
The rites of Venus with their paramours.
Thy mother, when the lowings of the herds
Had reach'd her ears, arose, and 'midst her band
Shouted aloud to rouse them from their sleep:
They from their balmy slumbers op'd their eyes,
And started up, but with that modesty
'Twas wonderful to see, the young, the old,
And the unmarried virgins. O'er their necks
Their loose-devolving hair they spread, refix
Their vestments, such whose cinctures were unloos'd,
And o'er them bind the spotted skins of fawns,
With serpents wreathing round their shaded cheeks.
Some holding in their arms a kid, and some
The wolves' wild whelps, taught them to drain their breasts
Swelling with milk, their new-born infants left
At home; then on their heads their garlands place
Of oak, of ivy, and the silvery bloom
Of smilax: one her thyrsus took, and smote
The rock, out gush'd the pure translucent stream;
Another cast her light wand on the ground,
Instant, so will'd the god, a fount of wine
Sprung forth; if any wish'd a softer draught,
These with their fingers op'd the ground, and milk
Issued in copious streams: and from their spears
With ivy wreath'd the dulcet honey flow'd.
Hadst thou been present, thou wou'dst not, as now,
Reville the god, but, seeing this, with vows
Address him. All the herdsmen gather'd round,
And all the shepherds, with dissentient voice
To descant on these deeds, that struck their sense
With dread and wonder. 'Midst us came a man
Practis'd in city wiles, and train'd to gloze
His hackney'd tongue, who thus bespoke us all:
You, who the hallow'd mountain's pastoral tracts
Inhabit, from her orgies shall we chase

The royal dame Agave, to our king
Doing a grace? We thought he counsell'd well,
And, cover'd in the leafy thickets, took
Our secret stations: at th' appointed hour
They shook the thyrsus to their revelry,
And shouted Evøe Bacchus, son of Jove,
With thick'ning clamours; all the mountains danced
To their wild revelry, with all its beasts,
And nothing at their measures stood unmov'd.
Near me Agave chanced to bound along,
I, from the thicket where I stood conceal'd,
Sprung forward with an eager wish to seize her:
She cried aloud, Companions of my chace,
We by these men are chas'd; but follow me,
Follow, and with the thyrsus arm your hands.
We sav'd ourselves by flight, the Bacchæ else
Had torn us piecemeal; on the herds, that grazed
The verdant slope, their hands unarm'd with steel,
They rush'd; an heifer lowing might'st thou see
Held in the hands of one, and others rent
The herds; their limbs and cleft hoofs might'st thou see
Hurl'd to and fro, and hanging on the pines
Distain their green with blood: e'en the fierce bulls,
Wont with their angry horns to threaten, fell,
Beneath a thousand hands of youthful females
Dragg'd to the ground: asunder were they rent
E'er thou cou'dst close thy royal eyelids down.
Instant, like birds that wing their airy flight,
They hurried to th' extended plains below,
Which, by Asopus water'd, yield to Thebes
A plenteous harvest; to Erythra's walls,
And Hysia, fix'd beneath Cithæron's heights:
On these with hostile rage they fell, and rent
Whate'er they found, and toss'd it scatter'd wide;
And e'en their children from their houses snatch'd.
Whate'er was on their shoulders plac'd, remain'd
Fix'd, though not bound, and fell not to the earth,
Were it or brass or iron; in their hair

They carried fire, yet were their locks not burnt.
 Those, who were plunder'd by these madding dames,
 Flew in their rage to arms; then might'st thou see
 A sight, O king, had struck thee with amaze;
 Unstain'd with blood their iron-pointed spears
 Fell harmless, whilst each thyrsus gor'd with wounds:
 Dismay ensued, and flight, by female hands
 Men vanquish'd, not without some god. And now
 Back to the heights, which they had left, they wing'd
 Their way, and to the fountains which the god
 Had open'd for them, and wash'd off the blood,
 Whilst from their cheeks the serpent's cleansing tongue
 Lick'd the warm drop. Therefore receive, O king,
 This god, whoe'er he be, into the city;
 For, pow'rful as he is, his bounty gave,
 So fame reports, the sorrow-ceasing vine
 To men: where wine is wanting, love soon flies;
 Nothing so bathes the spirits in delight.

CHOR. The words of freedom to a tyrant's ear
 I dread to utter, yet they shall be utter'd:
 This Bacchus is inferior to no god.

PENT. These insults of the Bacchæ, like a flame,
 Are kindled near us, a reproach to Greece.
 This is no time for slow delay; with speed
 Fly to th' Electran gates, bid all that bear
 The massy shield, that mount the rapid steed,
 That toss the light targe, and the stringed bow
 Grasp in their hands, attend me; I will lead them
 Against these Bacchæ. No, it is too much,
 From women to endure this insolence.

BACC. What I have told thee, Pentheus, hath not pow'r
 To move thee; but, though thy rude rage hath fallen
 On me with rig'rous vengeance, I will say
 Ill it becomes thee thus to rise in arms

845. The messenger is gone to execute the commands of his king; and the parts afterwards assigned to him must be given to Bacchus. There is in this scene some other confusion of persons, which could not escape the penetration of Mr. Heath, whom the translator follows.

Against the god : rest thou in quiet then ;
 For Bacchus will not suffer thee to drive
 His females from their orgie-sounding heights.

PENT. Thou shalt not check me : though from bonds escap'd,
 Take heed, or thou again shalt feel my vengeance.

BACC. I rather would adore him, than in rage
 Spurn at his pow'r, a mortal 'gainst a god.

PENT. These females from Cithæron's craggy steeps
 Will I dislodge, and spread the carnage wide.

BACC. You all will fly : this foul disgrace awaits you,
 Smote by the thyrsus of the bacchic dames,
 To cast the brazen-plated shields away.

PENT. This stranger is intractable, and gives
 Endless disquiet, nor in suffering rests,
 Nor acting.

BACC. Yet might this be well compos'd.

PENT. What should I do ? be to my slaves a slave ?

BACC. I without arms will bring these females hither.

PENT. This is some secret treachery plann'd against me.

BACC. What treachery, if I wish my arts should save thee ?

PENT. A common compact this, to revel still.

BACC. I own my compact, namely, with the god.

PENT. Bring me my arms : and thou forbear thy speech.

BACC. Close seated on the mountains wou'dst thou see them ?

PENT. I wish it, and would give vast sums of gold.

BACC. And what excites thee to this ardent wish ?

PENT. I long to see them when inflam'd with wine.

BACC. Wou'dst thou with pleasure see what would offend thee ?

PENT. Hid by the pines in silence will I look.

BACC. But they will trace thee to thy secret stand.

PENT. Then open let it be : well hast thou said.

BACC. I am thy guide : thou shalt attempt the way.

PENT. Guide me this instant, and command my time.

BACC. In linen vestments then array thyself.

PENT. Why to the semblance of a woman chang'd ?

BACC. Lest, if discover'd as a man, they kill thee.

PENT. This is well judg'd ; I now shall deem thee wise.

BACC. We this monition were by Bacchus taught.

- PENT. How then shall thy device be put in act?
 BACC. Enter thy house, there will I rightly dress thee.
 PENT. How dress me? like a woman? shame forbids.
 BACC. Wish then no more to see the Mænades.
 PENT. What is the dress in which thou wou'dst attire me?
 BACC. First, from thy head a length of hair shall flow.
 PENT. And with what ornaments array me next?
 BACC. Long flowing robes, a mitre on thy head.
 PENT. To this attire hast thou aught else to add?
 BACC. A thyrsus, and a young hind's dappled skin.
 PENT. I could not bear this womanish attire.
 BACC. Yet wou'dst thou spread the carnage wide in fight.
 PENT. Well: let me view them first, myself unseen.
 BACC. 'Tis wiser thus, than to hunt ills with ills.
 PENT. How through the city shall I pass unknown?
 BACC. Through unfrequented passes: I will guide thee.
 PENT. Let come what will rather than bear their scoffs.
 BACC. Within consult we what behoves us do;
 E'en what thou wilt; thy honour be my charge.
 PENT. I will attend thee; go with thee in arms,
 Or to thy counsels frame my yielding will.

BACCHUS, CHORUS.

- BACC. Yes, to the Bacchæ shall he go, and there
 Perish beneath their vengeance: as a mark
 He stands, ye females, to our shafts exposed.
 Now, Bacchus, comes thy part; nor distant thou;
 Avenge us on him; of his senses first
 Deprive him, with light madness strike his soul:
 For never in his senses would he wear
 This female dress: strike him with madness then,
 That he may put it on. I owe him this,
 To shew him in this womanish attire
 A jest to Thebes, for all those threats which late
 He fiercely utter'd. But I haste to fit

897. Bacchus here repeats the words of Pentheus, l. 857. but in a different sense; Pentheus intended the slaughter of the Bacchæ, Bacchus of Pentheus: we meet with many instances of this concealed meaning.

This dress for Pentheus, cloth'd in which he goes
 To death's dark realms, slain by his mother's hands;
 And he shall know that Bacchus, son of Jove,
 His rites asserting, is indeed a god
 Most dreadful, gentle else and mild to men.

CHORUS.

STRO. When shall I in midnight dance
 Light my snowy foot advance?
 When, my swelling bosom bare,
 Fling it to the dewy air?
 Like the sportive hind, that treads
 The rich luxuriance of the verdant meads,
 When the dreadful chace she flies,
 O'er the close nets nimbly bounds,
 Hears no more the hunters' cries
 Cheer the swift-pursuing hounds:
 With the wing'd wind's rapid speed
 From all her toils, from all her dangers freed,
 Careless she roves the wat'ry glades,
 Joys in the lonely wilds, and dark embow'ring shades.
 Do heav'n's rich stores, does wisdom know
 A mead more glorious, than with conquering hand
 To grasp the proud head of a foe?
 Raptures still rise where Glory takes her stand.

ANTIS. Slow it comes, but holds its course
 Awful with unfailing force:
 On the wretch, who rites divine
 Pays at Vice's impure shrine,
 Who with pride the gods defies:
 Faithful to pour the vengeance of the skies,
 They the ling'ring foot of time
 Oft conceal from mortal view;
 But the bold unholy crime
 Still its silent steps pursue.
 Deem then, just to Virtue's cause,
 Nought more rever'd, more sacred than the Laws:
 And learn each pow'r of heav'n to own,
 For Right and ancient Law have fix'd their stedfast throne.

Do heav'n's rich stores, does wisdom know
 A meed more glorious, than with conquering hand
 To grasp the proud head of a foe?
 Raptures still rise where Glory takes her stand.

EP.OD. Blest is the man, who, 'scap'd the stormy seas,
 The welcome harbour gains :
 And blest is he, who, now at ease,
 Sees with success his weary labours crown'd.
 But 'midst the various blessings round
 One greater wealth, one higher pow'r obtains:
 Yet to the myriads, which man's life supplies,
 Myriads of hopes gay-smiling rise;
 Some fruitless fade away,
 Some to perfection each fair blossom raise.
 His happiness I praise,
 Whose life with blessings cheers each joyful day.

BACCHUS, PENTHEUS, CHORUS.

BACC. Thou, who wou'dst see what to thy curious eye
 Is not permitted, thou, who wou'dst attempt
 Things not to be attempted, Pentheus, ho !
 To thee I call, come forth, appear in sight,
 In female vestments, like the Mænades,
 Accounted on thy mother and her train
 To be a spy, thy graceful figure shew :
 A daughter sure of Cadmus meets our eye.

PENT. Methinks I see two suns, a double Thebes,
 And its seven gates rise double to my sight.
 A bull thou seem'st to lead us, on thy head
 Thou bearest horns ; art thou indeed a beast ?
 Thou hast the semblance of a beast. The god,
 Before not friendly, goes with us along.

BACC. He is confederate with us : now thou seest
 What thou shou'dst see.

985. Dr. Musgrave, following Tyrwhitt, assigns this line to Bacchus ; but if it be read with a comma after *ἐμαρτί*,

'Ο θεὸς ἐμαρτί, πρόσθεν ὧν οὐκ εἰμὴν, v. 921.

it strongly marks the change in the mind of Pentheus, now touched with frenzy.

- PENT. What figure do I make?
Have I not Ino's or Agave's air?
- BACC. So like, methinks I see them, seeing thee.
But this loose lock is started from its place,
Nor as beneath thy mitre I compos'd it.
- PENT. Tossing my head, and rolling it within,
Acting these bacchic motions, I displac'd it.
- BACC. But we, whose care it is to deck thee forth
Will soon adjust it: upright bear thy head.
- PENT. See that thou dress me right; I trust to thee.
- BACC. Thy zone is loose, and these contracting folds
Let not thy robes flow seemly to thy feet.
- PENT. At my right foot they seem so; but at this
They fall in decent order to my ancles.
- BACC. Wilt thou not hold me dear, when thou shalt see,
Beyond thy warmest hopes, the modest Bacchæ?
- PENT. T' appear like one of them how should I bear
The thyrsus, in my right hand, or in this?
- BACC. In thy right hand, and with thy right foot raise it.
This change of resolution I commend.
- PENT. What, may I bear Cithæron's heights, and all
The Bacchæ with them, on my shoulders rais'd?
- BACC. Ay, if thou wilt, thou may'st: thy sense, before
Disorder'd, now is such as well becomes thee.
- PENT. Bear we then massy bars, or with my hands
Uprooted shall I place beneath its heights
My shoulders, or support them in my arms?
- BACC. Nay, it were pity to destroy these haunts
Where the nymphs love to sport, the fav'rite seats
Of Pan, where oft he breathes his rural reeds.
- PENT. Well hast thou said: these females will not be
By force subdued; I'll hide me 'mongst the firs.
- BACC. Hide thee! Aye, hide thee where thou ought'st to hide;
A fraudful spy upon the Mænades.
- PENT. They may be caught, I ween, amidst the thickets,
Like birds, in those delightful haunts that nest.
- BACC. And therefore wou'dst thou watch them: thou perchance
May'st catch them too, unless thou first art caught.

PENT. Conduct me through the midst of Thebes ; alone
Of all her sons I dare attempt this deed.

BACC. Alone thou labourest for this state, alone ;
Therefore a meed awaits thee, as is fit.
I will conduct thee safe ; to bring thee back
Shall be another's office.

PENT. What, my mother's ?

BACC. To all conspicuous.

PENT. And for that I go.

BACC. Thou shalt come carried back.

PENT. Thy words import

My delicacy.

BACC. In thy mother's arms.

PENT. Will she constrain me to this daintiness ?

BACC. Such dainties.

PENT. Such as I deserve I court.

BACC. Ruthless thou art, and ruthless art thou gone
To ruthless sufferings : therefore shalt thou find
A glory firmly 'stablish'd in the skies.
Stretch forth thy hands, Agave, with thy sisters,
Daughters of Cadmus ; see I bring this youth
To this great contest ; I shall be victorious,
And Bacchus : but th' event will shew the rest.

CHORUS.

STRO. Go, ye fleet dogs of Madness, go,
Sweep o'er the mountain's rugged brow,
Where sport the dames of Cadmus' royal race :
Inflame their frenetic fury high
To hold this female-vested wretch in chace,
Who madly dares their hallow'd haunts espy.
Him from Cithæron's rocky head,
Or some enclosure's rising mound,
His mother first shall view in ambush laid,
Then shouting call the Mænades around,
These heights, these heights, ye Bacchæ, who
Ascends, our mountain-ranging train to view ?
Whence is his lineage trac'd ?

His birth he to no woman owes;
But from some tygress in the howling waste,
Or Libyan Gorgon rose.

Vengeance, in all thy terrors clad, appear,
High thy thund'ring falchion rear,
Stain it in his unrighteous, impious gore,
And ruin on this earth-born tyrant pour.

ANTIS.

He with unjust nefarious thought,
And with unholy madness fraught,
Against thy orgies, Bacchus, dares to fight,
Against his mother's hallow'd train,
By force to conquer thy unconquer'd might,
Swoln with obdurate pride and malice vain.
With peace their cloudless days shall shine,
Who wisdom's temp'rate pow'r obey:
But death on him, that spurns at rites divine,
Comes undisguis'd, and rushes on his prey.

With joy I see their greatness rise,
And envy not when Glory crowns the wise;
In honour train'd their lives

By day, by night the gods adore:
But lawless is his rage, who madly strives
T' insult their slighted pow'r.

Vengeance, in all thy terrors clad appear,
High thy thund'ring falchion rear;
Stain it in his unrighteous, impious gore,
And ruin on this earth-born tyrant pour.

EPOD.

His sense, O son of Jove, confound;
A bull to his astonish'd eyes appear;

Or as a dragon rear

An hundred threat'ning heads: or to his sight
A lion breathing flames around

His guilty soul affright.

Go, hunter god, pursue the chace,
Whilst the smile brightens on thy face:

Go, hunter god, thy Bacchæ lead,
Their unabating, fatal speed

Shall seize the savage as he flies,
And triumph o'er their trembling prize.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESS. O house, illustrious once through Greece, thou house
Of th' old Sidonian chief, who sow'd in th' earth
The dragon harvest of the serpent's seed,
How I lament thee, though a slave; yet slaves,
If faithful, mourn the ruin of their lords.

CHOR. What tidings bearest thou? from the Bacchæ aught?

MESS. Pentheus is dead, earth-born Echion's son.

CHOR. O sovereign Bacchus, thou art found a god!

MESS. What say'st thou, woman? what import thy words?
Dost thou then glory in my lord's ill fate?

CHOR. A stranger, in barbaric strains I hymn
The god, nor longer dread the threaten'd chains.

MESS. Is there no manly spirit left in Thebes?

CHOR. O'er me not Thebes, but Bacchus hath command.

MESS. So far thou may'st be pardon'd; but to joy
In evils suffer'd, that becomes you not.

CHOR. But tell me how he perish'd, by what death,
The ruthless man devising ruthless deeds.

MESS. Soon as we left Therapnæ, to our Thebes
Adjacent, and had pass'd Asopus' stream,
We mount Cithæron's steep, Pentheus, myself,
(I on my lord attended,) and our guide,
The stranger; to the forest first we came,
And trod with silent step the grassy ground,
Nor breath'd a whisper, for we went to see,
Not to be seen. An hollow glen was here,
On each side crags arose, and through the midst,
With pine trees shaded round, a streamlet flow'd.
There sate the Mænades, their hands employ'd
In grateful tasks: around the thyrsus some,
Deserted of its foliage, wreath'd afresh
The ivy twine; some, from the various heights
Like hinds descending, with melodious voice

Respondent each to each the sprightly song
To Bacchus rais'd. Th' unhappy Pentheus here,
The female band not seeing, thus bespoke
The stranger, Where I stand my searching eye
Descries not their employ; let me ascend
Some pine that waves his tall top o'er yon mound,
Thence might I view distinct their shameful deeds.
There with amaze a wond'rous act I saw,
A pine's aerial branch the stranger took,
And downward drew it, drew it to the ground,
Till, as one bends a bow, or curves the line
That marks the rolling wheel's circumference,
The stranger with his hands the mountain pine
Drew down, and bent it to the earth, a deed
Exceeding mortal strength: amidst the boughs
He seated Pentheus, to its upright state
Then let the branch with gentle motion rise,
Lest the too quick and violent recoil
Should toss him from his hold: and now the tree
Stood firm its upright height, and bore my lord,
Seen by the Bacchæ, more than seeing them,
As more conspicuous in his lofty seat.
And now the stranger was no more beheld;
But from th' ethereal height a voice was heard,
Of Bacchus, it should seem, calling aloud,
Ye blooming females, him I bring, who held
Your train, and me, and my mysterious rites
In proud derision: pour your vengeance on him.
He spoke, and to the sky, and to the earth
Display'd a steady blaze of sacred light.
The air was hush'd, through all the pastur'd grove
And all its leaves a solemn silence reign'd,
Nor sound of beast was heard: the Theban dames,
The voice not heard distinct, start from their seats,
And roll their eyes around: again he gave
The dread command: but when they clearly knew
The bidding of the god, with rapid speed,
Swift as the flight of doves, they forward rush'd,

Agave, and the dames of royal blood,
And all the Bacchæ: with the god inspir'd
They bounded o'er the torrent of the grove,
And up the crags; but when my lord they saw
High-seated on the pine, they mount a cliff
Full opposite, and at his head first hurl
What of the rock their hands could grasp: and some
The broken branches of a pine tree dart:
Others aloft at his uneasy seat
The thyrsus cast, but reach'd him not, the height
Beyond their aim, where my unhappy lord
Astonied sate, nor had what to devise.
And now the boughs of oaks, and their tough roots
Rent from the ground, nor wanted they for this
Poles arm'd with iron, in a vollied storm
They hurl'd: but when Agave saw their toils
Wasted in vain, she cried, Haste, form a ring,
And grasp the stem around, that we may seize
This mounted savage; let him not divulge
The secret orgies of the god: at once
A thousand hands were to the pine applied,
And instant from the ground uprooted it;
Pentheus, high-seated, with it from his height
Came headlong to the earth, with many a groan,
For mischief now he saw was nigh at hand.
Agave, as the priestess of the rites,
Began the murd'rous work, and rushes on him;
The mitre from his hair he rent, that known
His mother might not kill him; on her cheek
He plac'd his soothing hand, and suppliant said,
'Tis Pentheus, O my mother, 'tis thy son,
Thine and Echion's son, who sues to thee;
Have pity on me, mother, do not kill
Thy son for his offence. She foam'd with rage,
Rolling her eyes askance, nor harbour'd thoughts
She ought to harbour, frenetic with the god,
Nor listen'd to his pray'rs; but his left hand
She seiz'd, and pressing on his side tore off

His shoulder, with a force not hers, the deed
 Made easy by the god. On th' other side
 Ino assisted in the dreadful work,
 Rending his flesh : Autonoe hung upon him,
 And all the Bacchæ: every voice was rais'd
 At once ; his dying breath was spent in groans ;
 They shouted wild : one snatch'd an arm, and one
 A sandal'd foot, dismember'd by their force
 Lay the bare trunk ; in their ensanguin'd hands
 Each hurl'd the flesh of Pentheus to and fro ;
 His limbs were scatter'd ; on the craggy rocks
 Some, on the close-entwined thickets some,
 No easy search ; the miserable head
 His mother, as she caught it in her hands,
 Fix'd on her thyrsus, o'er Cithæron bears
 High-lifted, as some mountain lion's spoils :
 Leaving her sisters with the Mænades,
 And proud of her ill-fated prize, her steps
 She this way bends, on Bacchus calling loud,
 The partner of the chace and of the prize,
 The glorious conqueror, who this conquest gain'd
 Of tears to her. This horrid scene I fled,
 E'er to this house Agave should return.
 A modest awe and reverence of the gods
 I deem the most distinguish'd ornament,
 And wisdom's noblest height in mortal man.

CHOR. To Bacchus raise the choral strain,
 And celebrate the god for Pentheus slain.
 This tyrant of the dragon race,
 Our hallow'd haunts to trace,
 Conceal'd a female stole beneath,
 The thyrsus shook with impious pride,
 The faithful wand of death,
 And on his ruin rush'd, a bull his guide.
 Ye Theban dames, to Bacchus dear,
 Your god hath led the vaunting foe,
 His hopes of conquest vanish'd into air,
 To groans, to tears, to woe.

A glorious conquest, when her hand
 With her son's gushing blood distain'd
 The mother rais'd. —————

No more: I see her; to this royal house
 Agave speeds, rolling her furious eyes
 Askance. Receive th' associate of the god.

AGAVE, CHORUS.

AGAV. Ye Asiatic Bacchæ ———

CHOR. Why that call?

AGAV. We from the mountains bring a new-slain prize,
 A glorious capture, to this royal house.

CHOR. I see it, and receive thee to our band.

AGAV. I caught him without toils, without a troop
 Of hunters, this young lion: thou may'st see him.

CHOR. In what lone wild?

AGAV. Cithæron.

CHOR. Of Cithæron

What?

AGAV. Kill'd him.

CHOR. But whose hand first wounded him?

AGAV. 'Tis mine, it is my prize.

CHOR. Happy Agave!

AGAV. My name amidst the bacchic train is fam'd:
 What other dame from Cadmus ———

CHOR. What of Cadmus?

AGAV. Who, sprung from Cadmus, save myself, myself,
 Once touch'd this savage?

CHOR. Happy in thy prize!

AGAV. Share then the feast.

CHOR. Alas, what should I share?

AGAV. 'Tis but a whelp: beneath his shaggy head
 The hair yet soft begins to clothe his cheeks:
 This brinded mane is the rough grace, that marks
 The mountain savage. Bacchus to this chace,
 The hunter Bacchus, rous'd the Mænades,
 Shewing his skill.

CHOR. The chace delights our king.

AGAV. Thou dost commend him.

CHOR. What do I commend?

AGAV. The Thebans soon, and Pentheus too, my son,
Shall praise his mother, who this glorious prize
Took gloriously, this lion-gender'd prize.

CHOR. Dost thou exult!

AGAV. I joy, I joy in deeds
So great, so glorious, by my hand perform'd.

CHOR. Shew then, unhappy, to thy citizens
Shew the proud conquest thou hast brought with thee.

AGAV. You, who the beauteous-structur'd tow'rs of Thebes
Inhabit, come, daughters of Cadmus, come,
And see this prize, this savage, which I caught
Not grasping the Thessalian spear, nor round
Spreading the toils; but with these vig'rous arms
Of snowy whiteness; this I make my boast,
And the fine artist forms the spear in vain;
For with these hands I caught him, with these hands
I rent the bleeding savage limb from limb.
Where is my aged father? let him come:
Where is my son, my Pentheus? He will fix
High on the sculptur'd pillar, that supports
The fretted roof, this head, the lion's spoils
Which in the chace I caught, and bring with me.

CADMUS, AGAVE, CHORUS.

CADM. Follow me, you that bear the wretched load
Of Pentheus; my attendants, follow me;
For to the house I bear his body, found
With toilsome search along Cithæron's heights
Rent piecemeal, and the members scatter'd wide,
With pain collected in the mazy wood.
For as the gates I enter'd with the seer,
Hoary Tiresias, of the daring deeds
Wrought by my daughters in their bacchic rage
I heard; and back returning to the heights
I bring my son, slain by the Mænades.
The mother of Actæon there I saw,

Autonoe, with Ino at her side,
Roving with frenetic speed the tangled wilds :
One there inform'd me that Agave bent
This way her bacchic foot ; he told me truth ;
I see her here, her look betokening mischief.

AGAV. My father, I may justly boast to thee
That thou hast daughters who in worth excel
All of their sex ; this praise belongs to all,
But most to me, who left th' embroider'd web
For deeds of higher enterprize, to chase
The mountain savage ; and this glorious prize,
See in mine arms I bring, which hung on high
May grace thy house : my father, in thy hands
Receive them ; glorying in my well-earn'd spoils
Invite thy friends, and spread the joyful feast :
For thou art blest, in our achievements blest.

CADM. Unmeasurable grief ! This is a sight
Not to be borne, this murder by your hands
Committed. To the gods dost thou present
A goodly victim, to the festive board
Inviting Thebes and me. Thy miseries first
I wail, and then mine own. The royal Bacchus
With justice hath undone us, but severe
In vengeance, as from hence he draws his birth.

AGAV. How wayward is old age, of aspect sour,
To all around morose ! May my son be
Successful in the chace, and imitate
His mother's manners, 'midst the Theban youth
When ardent he pursues the savage beast ?
But he alone dares fight against the god :
He must be warn'd of this by thee, my father,
And me, nor pride him in pernicious wisdom.
Where is he ? To my presence, who will call him,
That he may see me happy in my prize ?

CADM. Ah me ! When you shall know what you have done,
How wretched will you be ? Should you remain
Always as now, though far from happiness,
Yet will you be insensible of ill.

- AGAV. What is not glorious, what is mournful here?
CADM. To yon ethereal height first raise thine eyes.
AGAV. I do: and there what am I to behold?
CADM. Seems it the same, or to receive a change?
AGAV. Brighter it seems, and clearer than before.
CADM. Hangs the same wild amazement on thy soul?
AGAV. I know not; but I feel my sense return'd,
And each conception of my mind is chang'd.
CADM. Wilt thou then hear, and coolly answer me?
AGAV. All memory of my former words is lost.
CADM. What house receiv'd thee with connubial rites?
AGAV. Thou gav'st me to the dragon-sprung Echion.
CADM. What son then to thy husband didst thou bear?
AGAV. Pentheus, the offspring of our mutual love.
CADM. Whose is that head thou graspest in thine arms?
AGAV. A lion's, as the female hunters said.
CADM. Look at it, small the labour, view it well.
AGAV. What do I see? What bear I in my hands?
CADM. Look with attention at it; know it clearly.
AGAV. I see the greatest grief: unhappy me!
CADM. Appears it to thee like a lion's head?
AGAV. No: but I hold, ah me! the head of Pentheus.
CADM. Lamented, e'er thy sense distinguish'd it.
AGAV. Who slew him? And how came it in my hands?
CADM. Unhappy truth, ah how unwelcome art thou!
AGAV. Tell me: my anguish'd heart already throbs.
CADM. By thee, and by thy sisters, was he slain.
AGAV. Where died he? in the house? or in what place?
CADM. Where 'midst his clamorous hounds Actæon fell.
AGAV. Why to Cithæron went my wretched son?
CADM. T' insult thy orgies, and the god, he went.
AGAV. What to those craggy heights could urge our steps?
CADM. Madness: and all the frenetic city rav'd.
AGAV. Too late I see it, Bacchus hath undone us.
CADM. Revil'd and wrong'd, you deem'd him not a god.
AGAV. Where is the much-lov'd body of my son?
CADM. With pain I found it in the wilds, and bring it.
AGAV. Are the parts well united? On my son

How great a portion of my madness fell !

- CADM. He was like you, and reverenc'd not the god,
 Who therefore bound us all in the same chain
 Of ruin, him, and you, to desolate
 The house, and me, who destitute of sons
 Behold this manly branch, which sprung from thee,
 Murder'd most vilely, and most shamefully,
 To whom all look'd with reverence. Thou, my child,
 My daughter's son, didst in my house bear rule,
 And awe the city : none to my hoar hairs
 Dar'd offer violence, beholding thee ;
 Thy vengeance had chastis'd him : from my house
 Disgrac'd, an outcast shall I now be driven,
 The mighty Cadmus, who the Theban race
 Sow'd in the ground, and reap'd the glorious harvest.
 Dearest of men ! for thou, though now no more,
 Shalt yet be number'd 'mongst my best lov'd sons.
 No more thy hand shall stroke this beard, no more
 Embrace thy mother's father, nor thy voice
 Address me thus, Who wrongs thy reverend age ?
 Who dares dishonour thee ? who wrings thy heart
 With rude offence ? Inform me, and this hand
 Shall punish him that injures thee, my father.
 But now I am afflicted, wretched thou.
 Thy mother sinks beneath her misery,
 And her unhappy sisters. If there be
 A man, whose impious pride contemns the gods,
 Let him behold his death, and own their pow'r.
- CHOR. Cadmus, we grieve for thee : thy daughter's son
 Hath his reward, just, though it pains thy heart.
- BACC. O father, for my state now chang'd thou seest,
 Thou and thy lov'd Harmonia, who from Mars
 Descended grac'd thy bed, though mortal thou,

1407. Tyrwhitt thinks that the original is here mutilated ; to him Dr. Musgrave assents. Mr. Heath proposes a small, but very ingenious, emendation : Barnes defends the present text. The translator follows Mr. Heath. Bacchus now appears in his proper dignity as a god.

Shall wear a dragon's savage form. With her,
 For so the oracle of Jove declares,
 Toils after toils revolving shalt thou bear,
 Leading barbarians; and with forces vast
 Level great towns and many to the ground:
 But when the shrine of Phœbus their rude hands
 Shall plunder, intercepting their return
 Misfortune shall await them: thee shall Mars
 Deliver and Harmonia from the ruin,
 And place you in the regions of the blest.
 This, from no mortal father, but from Jove
 Descended, Bacchus tells thee: had you known
 What prudence is, but you would none of hêr,
 You might have flourish'd in a prosp'rous state,
 Blest with th' alliance of the son of Jove.

CADM. We have offended; we entreat forgiveness.

BACC. Too late you learn: you would not when you ought.

CADM. We own it; yet thy vengeance is severe.

BACC. Though born a god, I was insulted by you.

CADM. Ill suits the gods frail man's relentless wrath.

BACC. Long since my father Jove thus grac'd his son.

AGAV. Ah me! it is decreed, unhappy exile.

CADM. Alas, my daughter, in what dreadful ills
 Are we all plung'd, thy sisters, and thyself
 Unhappy! I shall bear my wretched age
 To sojourn with barbarians, fated yet
 To lead a mix'd-barbaric host to Greece.
 Harmonia too, my wife, the child of Mars,
 Chang'd to a dragon's savage form, myself
 A dragon, to the altars, to the tombs
 Of Greece, a chief with many a ported spear
 Shall I lead back; and never shall my toils
 Know respite; never shall I pass the stream
 Of Acheron below, and there find rest.

AGAV. Hence, rest of thee, my father, will I fly.

1412. The translator readily acknowledges his uncertainty of the true reading and true sense of this passage.

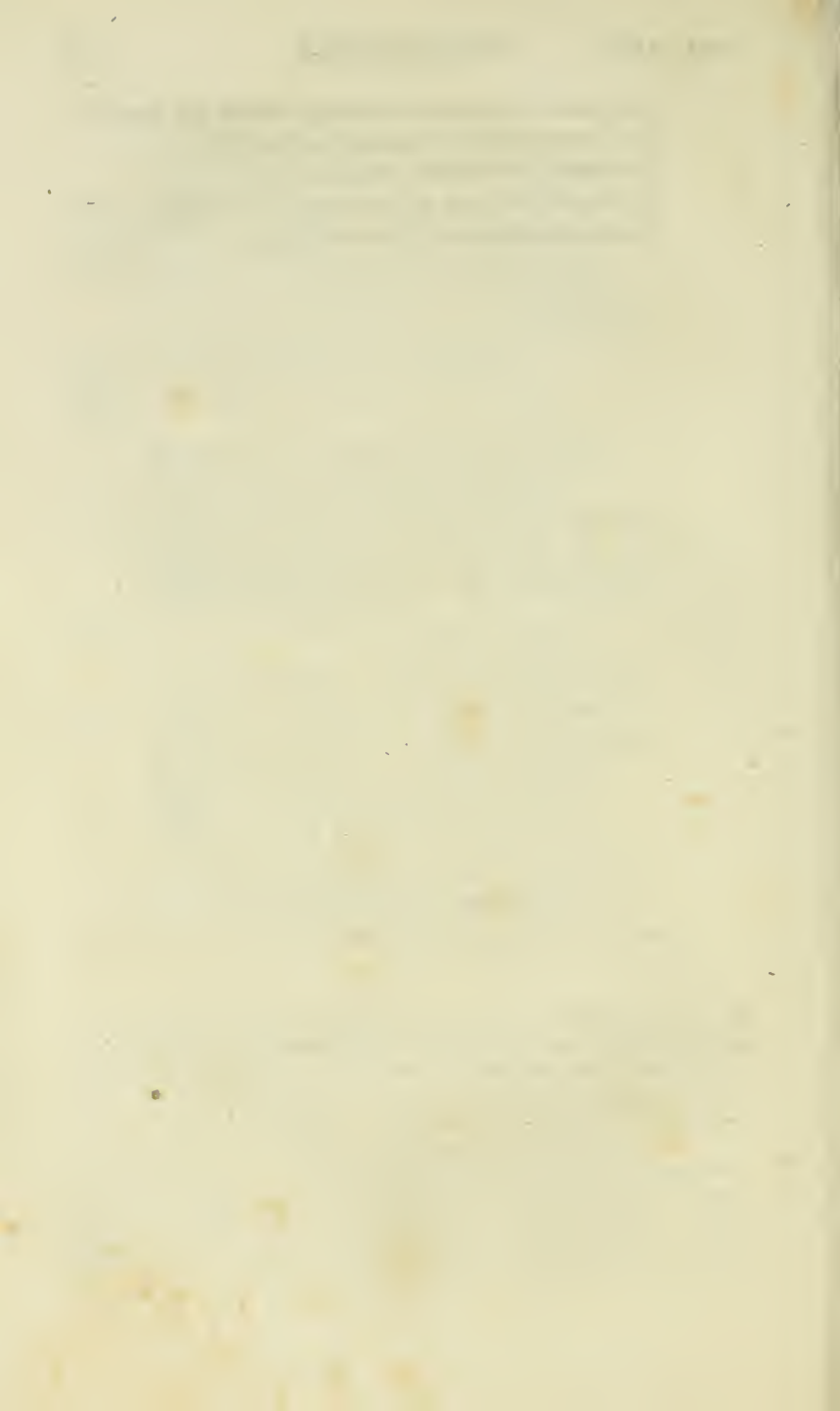
- CADM. Why, my unhappy daughter, on my hand
Thus dost thou hang, as if the silver swan
Should fly for refuge to the useless drone?
- AGAV. A wretched outcast, which way shall I fly?
- CADM. I know not, child: small aid thy father gives.
- AGAV. Farewell, my royal mansion, and farewell
Thou city of my fathers; I will leave thee,
Through grief an exile from my nuptial bed.
- CADM. Go now, my child, to Aristæus go.
- AGAV. I am bereav'd of thee, my father.
- CADM. Thine,
My daughter, and thy sisters' woes I wail.
- AGAV. Severely, most severely hath the god
Brought on thy house this dreadful punishment.
- CADM. Dreadful through you my sufferings; every tongue
Shall sound my name with infamy in Thebes.
- AGAV. Farewell, my father.
- CADM. My unhappy child,
Thou too farewell, if aught can now be well.
- AGAV. Lead, my attendants, lead me to my sisters,
That I may take them with me, of my flight
Mournful associates. Thither will I go,
Where no Cithæron is polluted, where
These eyes may never see Cithæron more,
And where no thyrsus wakes uneasy thought.
To other Bacchic dames I leave these rites.
- CHOR. With various hand the gods dispense our fates;

1446. This also is a suspected passage: the proposed emendation of Mr. Heath is too violent, and little assists the sense. Dr. Musgrave observes, that the Swan is celebrated by Sophocles for its filial affection; and that Euripides has elsewhere used the word *νεφῆνα*, a drone, to denote an enfeebled helpless old man.

1453. That is, to Thessaly, where Aristæus fed the sheep of the Muses. Apollon. Rhod. l. 2. Dr. Musgrave.—He was the husband of Autonoe.

1458, 1459. These two lines are generally assigned to Bacchus: but after he had shewn himself as a god, and declared that his father Jupiter had long so graced his son, his continuance in the scene would be unnecessary, and even improper: they are therefore here given to Cadmus. The learned reader will judge.

Now show'ring various blessings, which our hopes
Dar'd not aspire to; now controlling ills
We deem'd inevitable: thus the god
To these hath giv'n an end exceeding thought:
Such is the fortune of this awful day.



I O N.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MERCURY

ION

CREUSA

XUTHUS

TUTOR

ATTENDANT

PRIESTESS OF APOLLO

MINERVA

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN DAMES.

I O N.

THE Athenians were remarkably proud of their high-traced ancestry ; and not satisfied with claiming their origin from the earth of their country, they went further, and derived their heroes and kings from some god ; such a descent was then esteemed the highest honour : thus Ion was the son of Apollo, which furnished the subject of this tragedy. An exposed infant carried to the temple of Delphi, educated there till the state of manhood, constantly employed in the service of the god, and sequestered from the business of the world, promises a singular character : his religious education had impressed his mind with the deepest sense of virtue, and his retired life had thrown around him the most amiable and modest simplicity : though superior to the pride of riches and the pomp of power, as soon as his declared father commanded him to quit his agreeable office in the temple and assume his rank, he obeyed : though an attempt had been made to kill him, and he was armed with the authority of the state to punish the convicted stranger, upon the admonition of the Priestess he desisted : these are traits of an uniform character. If we can so far adopt the spirit of ancient times, as to allow the love of Apollo for Creusa, there is nothing exceptionable in this tragedy, but the commission of Creusa to the old slave to poison Ion : and even here the belief that her husband had injured her bed, that he was with premeditated fraud bringing a spurious son to her house and throne,

and that her own life was in danger, with the received opinion that it was allowable to be revenged on an enemy, which even the philosophy of Plato had not eradicated, plead in her excuse ; and she might rather appear gentle in not pursuing her revenge further, than vindictive in attempting to take off the obnoxious youth. However that may be, her situation, as P. Brumoy finely observes, is drawn from the true feelings of the human heart, and as such is in the true taste of theatrical representation. The conduct of the drama is admirable : from the mother's attempt to poison the son, and the son's attempt to put the mother to death, each unacquainted with their mutual relation, arises by a natural train of incidents a discovery which gives an happy catastrophe to the tragedy, which is of the most pleasing kind, simple, tender, affecting, and abounding, perhaps too much, with beautiful description. Minerva indeed has a part assigned to her little adapted to her character ; perhaps Mercury might with more propriety have concluded the drama, as he had opened it ; but an Athenian audience was to be gratified with the appearance of their tutelary goddess.

The scene is before the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

I O N.

1—27.

MERC. **ATLAS**, that on his brazen shoulders rolls
Yon heav'n, the ancient mansion of the gods,
Was by a goddess sire to Maia; she
To supreme Jove bore me, and call'd me **Hermes**;
Attendant on the king his high behests
I execute. To Delphi am I come,
This land where Phœbus from his central throne
Utters to mortals his high strain, declaring
The present and the future; this the cause;
Greece hath a city of distinguish'd glory,
Which from the goddess of the golden lance
Receiv'd its name; Erectheus was its king;
His daughter, call'd Creusa, to th' embrace
Of nuptial love Apollo strain'd perforce,
Where northward points the rock beneath the heights
Crown'd with th' Athenian citadel of Pallas,
Call'd Macrai by the lords of Attica.
Her growing burden, to her sire unknown,
Such was the pleasure of the god, she bore,
Till in her secret chamber to a son
The rolling months gave birth; to the same cave,
Where by th' enamour'd god she was compress'd,
Creusa bore the infant; there for death
Expos'd him in a well-compacted ark
Of circular form, observant of the customs
Drawn from her great progenitors, and chief
From Erichonius, who from th' Attic earth

Deriv'd his origin: to him as guards
 Minerva gave two dragons, and in charge
 Consign'd him to the daughters of Aglauros:
 This rite to th' Erechthidæ hence remains,
 'Midst serpents wreath'd in ductile gold to nurse
 Their children. What of ornament she had,
 She hung around her son, and left him thus
 To perish. But to me his earnest prayer
 Phœbus applied, "to the high-lineag'd sons
 "Of glorious Athens go, my brother; well
 "Thou knowest the city of Pallas; from the cave
 "Deep in the hollow rock a new-born babe,
 "Laid as he is, and all his vestments with him,
 "Bring to thy brother to my shrine, and place
 "At th' entrance of my temple: of the rest,
 "For, know, the child is mine, I will take care."
 To gratify my brother thence I bore
 The osier-woven ark, and place the boy
 Here at the temple's base, the wreathed lid
 Uncovering, that the infant might be seen.
 It chanc'd, as th' orient sun the steep of heav'n
 Ascended, to the god's oracular seat
 The priestess entering on the infant cast
 Her eye, and marvell'd, deeming that some nymph
 Of Delphi at the fane had dar'd to lay
 The secret burden of her womb: this thought

30. Minerva took upon herself the care of this earth-born child. One day, going to Pallene, she delivered him to the three daughters of Cecrops and Aglauros in a little chest, charging them not to open it before her return. Curiosity however tempted them to disobey the command; they opened the chest, and saw two serpents wreathed around the infant. See l. 266.

38. It was the universal practice of the ancients, in their unnatural custom of exposing their children, to expose something of value, at least of ornament, with the infant: hence the mother in Terence says,

Sostrata.—*Ut stultæ et miseræ omnes sumus
 Religiosæ, quum exponendam do illi, de digito annulum
 Detraho, et eum dico ut una cum puella exponeret;
 Si moreretur, ne expers partis esset de nostris bonis.
 Chremes.—Istuc recte.——Heautontimor.*

Haste, thy early office know ;
 Branch of beauteous laurel come,
 Sweep Apollo's sacred dome,
 Cropt this temple's base beneath,
 Where th' immortal gardens breath,
 And eternal dews, that round
 Water the delicious ground,
 Bathe the myrtle's tresses fair.
 Lightly thus with constant care
 The pavement of the god I sweep,
 When o'er the Parnassian steep
 Flames the bright sun's mounting ray ;
 This my task each rising day.

Son of Latona, Pæan, Pæan, hail :
 Never, O never may thy honours fail !

ANTIS.

Grateful is my task, who wait
 Serving, Phœbus, at thy gate ;
 Honouring thus thy hallow'd shrine,
 Honour for the task is mine.
 Labouring with unwilling hands
 Me no mortal man commands :
 But, immortal gods, to you
 All my pleasing toil is due.
 Phœbus is to me a sire,
 Grateful thoughts my soul inspire ;
 Nurtur'd by thy bounty here
 Thee, Apollo, I revere ;
 And thy name in this rich seat
 As a father's I repeat.

Son of Latona, Pæan, Pæan, hail :
 Never, O never may thy honours fail !

Now from this labour with the laurel bough
 I cease ; and sprinkling from the golden vase

Apollo for the purposes here mentioned, and the tree constantly produced a fresh branch against the next morning ; it is therefore called *νηθελης* : so the vine on the summit sacred to Bacchus produced the daily-ripening bunch of grapes, from which the libation was made to that god. Vid. *Phœniss.* v. 237.

The chaste drops which Castalia's fountain rolls,
 Bedew the pavement. Never may I quit
 This office to the god; or, if I quit it,
 Be it, good Fortune, at thy favouring call!
 But see, the early birds have left their nests,
 And this way from Parnassus wing their flight.
 Come not, I charge you, near the battlements,
 Nor near the golden dome. Herald of Jove,
 Strong though thy beak beyond the feather'd kind,
 My bow shall reach thee. Tow'rd's the altar, see,
 A swan comes sailing: elsewhere wilt thou move
 Thy scarlet-tinctur'd foot? or from my bow
 The lyre of Phœbus to thy notes attun'd
 Will not protect thee; further stretch thy wings;
 Go, wanton, skin along the Delian lake,
 Or thou wilt steep thy melody in blood.
 Look, what strange bird comes onwards: wou'dst thou fix
 Beneath the battlements thy straw-built nest?
 My singing bow shall drive thee hence; begone,
 Or to the banks of Alpheus, gulfy stream,
 Or to the Isthmian grove; there hatch thy young;
 Mar not these pendant ornaments, nor soil
 The temple of the god: I would not kill you,
 'Twere pity, for to mortal man you bear
 The message of the gods; yet my due task
 Must be perform'd, and never will I cease
 My service to the god, who nurtur'd me.

ION, CHORUS.

CHO. The stately column, and the gorgeous dome
 Rais'd to the gods are not the boast alone
 Of our magnificent Athens; nor the statues
 That grace her streets: this temple of the god,
 Son of Latona, beauteous to behold,
 Beams the resplendent light of both her children.

187. This is a passage of acknowledged difficulty. *Διδύμων προσώπων καλλιέλι-
 φαρον φῶς*. Barnesius de duplici oculorum lumine nescio quid somniat, as Dr.
 Musgrave expresses himself. Carmeli translates it thus:

ION. Turn thine eyes this way: look, the son of Jove
Lops with his golden scimitar the heads
Of the Lernean Hydra: view it well.

CHO. I see him.

ION. And this other standing nigh,
Who snatches from the fire the blazing brand.

CHO. What is his name? The subject, on the web
Design'd, these hands have wrought in ductile gold.

ION. The shield-supporting Iolaus, who bears
The toils in common with the son of Jove.
View now this hero; on his winged steed

Divino Vate scorge
Il vago amato lume
Delli due nostri rai
Quegli ornamenti stessi.

Dr. Musgrave says, duplex ædium facies intelligenda mihi videtur, and shews from Pindar that *πρόσωπον* is sometimes used in that sense: we allow the learned Editor's authority, but cannot allow that the two fronts of the temple could be seen in one view. At Athens the Chorus had been accustomed not only to magnificent temples, but to the statues of Apollo in their streets, signified by *Ἀγυιάτιδες θεραπῆται*. *Ἀγυιῇ* i. e. ἐν τοῖς προπυλαίοις ἰδρυμένῃ. Schol. ad Phœnissa. v. 634: their wonder was to find the same magnificence at Delphi, the temple there as stately as any at Athens, and the same profusion of statues as they advanced to it. Pausanias, Phocic. c. ix. &c. enumerates these statues, and says particularly τὰ ἐν τοῖς αἵτοις ἔσιν Ἀρτεμῖς, καὶ Λητῶν, καὶ Ἀπόλλων. Brodæus then had reason to explain διδύμων προσώπων by the statues of Apollo and Diana; and καλλιερίφαρον φῶς may be supposed to mark their attributes, clarissima mundi lumina. These statues were in the Pediment, ἐν τοῖς αἵτοις; for which the translator has the authority of Mr. Stuart, who understands the Grecian Architecture better than all the Scholiasts that ever wrote. The learned reader will consider the following passage of Pindar, Olymp. Ode xiii. Epod. 1. and perhaps be of opinion that it gives light both to Pausanias and Euripides:

τίς δὲ ἰππί-
αις ἐν ἔντεσιν μέτρα,
ἢ θεῶν ναοῖσιν οἶω-
νῶν βασιλῆα δίδυ-
μον ἔθνε';

192. Iolaus is here plainly described as in the act of lifting the burning brand from the fire to sear the neck from which Hercules had lopt the head: to come at this sense for *παντὸν* Barnes reads *πυρσὸν*, Pierson *minimā mutatione παντὸν*, which he supports with good authorities: *δαλὸν* is perhaps the word which the classic reader would wish to supply.

197. Bellerophon mounted on the winged Pegasus, engaging with the Chimæra.

The triple-bodied monster's dreadful force
He conquers through the flames his jaws emit.

CHO. I view it all attentively.

ION. Observe

The battle of the giants, on the walls
Sculptur'd in stone.

CHO. * Let us note this, my friends.

ION. See where against Enceladus she shakes
Her gorgon shield.

CHO. I see my goddess, Pallas.

ION. Mark the tempestuous thunder's flaming bolt
Launch'd by the hand of Jove.

CHO. The furious Mimas
Here blazes in the vollied fires; and there
Another earth-born monster falls beneath
The wand of Bacchus wreath'd with ivy round,
No martial spear. But, as 'tis thine to tend
This temple, let me ask thee, is it lawful,
Leaving our sandals, its interior parts
To visit?

ION. Strangers, this is not permitted.

CHO. Yet may we make enquiries of thee?

ION. Speak;

What wou'dst thou know?

CHO. Whether this temple's site
Be the earth's centre.

ION. Aye; with garlands hung,
And gorgons all around.

CHO. So fame reports.

ION. If at the gate the honied cake be offer'd,
Would you consult the oracle, advance

202. Chorus. This is a fine touch: as Athenians nothing could be so agreeable to them as the honours paid to their tutelary goddess.

216. Ion. It is ingeniously conjectured by Dr. Musgrave, that Ion here points to a marble pillar thus adorned, fixed on the very point which they deemed the centre of the earth: he supports his opinion from this passage of Pausanias, τὸν δὲ ὑπὸ Διελφῶν καλούμενον ὀμφαλὸν, λίθου πεποιημένον λευκοῦ, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἐν μέσῳ γῆς πύσης αὐτοὶ λίγουσιν οἱ Διελφοὶ, ἐν ᾗ τινι Πίνδαρος ὁμολογοῦντά σφισιν ἰποιήσι. Phocic. c. xvi.

To th' altar: 'till the hallow'd lamb has bled
In sacrifice approach not the recess.

CHO. I am instructed: what the god appoints
As laws we wish not to transgress: without
Enough of ornament delights our eyes.

ION. Take a full view of all; that is allow'd.

CHO. To view the inmost shrine was our lord's order.

ION. Who are you call'd? Attendants on what house?

CHO. Our lords inhabit the magnificent domes
Of Pallas.—But she comes, of whom thou askest.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION. Lady, whoe'er thou art, that liberal air
Speaks an exalted mind: there is a grace,
A dignity in those of noble birth,
That marks their high rank. Yet I marvel much
That from thy closed lids the trickling tear
Water'd thy beauteous cheeks, soon as thine eye
Beheld this chaste oracular seat of Phœbus.
What brings this sorrow, lady? All besides,
Viewing the temple of the god, are struck
With joy; thy melting eye o'erflows with tears.

CREU. Not without reason, stranger, art thou seiz'd
With wonder at my tears; this sacred dome
Awakes the sad remembrance of things past.
I had my mind at home, though present here.
How wretched is our sex? And, O ye gods,
What deeds are yours? Where may we hope for right,
If by th' injustice of your pow'r undone?

ION. Why, lady, this inexplicable grief?

CREU. It matters not: my mind resumes its firmness:
I say no more; cease thy concern for me.

ION. But say who art thou? whence? what country boasts
Thy birth? and by what name may we address thee?

CREU. Creusa is my name, drawn from Erectheus
My high-born lineage, Athens gave me birth.

ION. Illustrious is thy state, thy ancestry
So noble, that I look with reverence on thee.

CREU. Happy indeed in this, in nothing further.

ION. But tell me, is it true what fame has blazon'd?

CREU. What wou'dst thou ask? Stranger, I wish to know.

ION. Sprung the first author of thy line from th' earth?

CREU. Aye, Erichthonius: but my race avails not.

ION. And did Minerva raise him from the earth?

CREU. Held in her virgin hands: she bore him not.

ION. And gave him as the picture represents?

CREU. Daughters of Cecrops these, charged not to see him.

ION. The virgins oped the interdicted chest?

CREU. And died, distaining with their blood the rock.

ION. But tell me, is this truth, or a vain rumour?

CREU. What wou'dst thou ask? I am not scant of time.

ION. Thy sisters did Erectheus sacrifice?

CREU. He slew the virgins, victims for their country.

ION. And thou of all thy sisters saved alone?

CREU. I was an infant in my mother's arms.

ION. And did the yawning earth swallow thy father?

CREU. By Neptune's trident smote; and so he perish'd.

ION. And Macrai call you not the fatal place?

CREU. Why dost thou ask? What thoughts hast thou recall'd?

ION. Does Phœbus, do his lightnings honour it?

CREU. Honour! Why this? Would I had never seen it!

ION. Why? dost thou hate the place dear to the god?

CREU. No: but for some base deed done in the cave.

ION. But what Athenian, lady, wedded thee?

CREU. Of Athens none, but one of foreign birth.

266. Pausanias tells us, that Pandrosus obeyed the mandate of the goddess; but that her sisters Herse and Aglauros were for their disobedience driven to madness, and threw themselves from the steepest part of the rock on which the citadel stood. Attic. c. xviii.

269. Erectheus had six daughters; Procris married to Cephalus, Orithyia carried off by Boreas, Chthonia married to Butes, Creusa to Xuthus, Protogenia and Pandora. These two are the virgins here mentioned, who voluntarily offered themselves to death, to give effect to an oracle delivered to their father in his war against the Thracians. Of such oracles and such sacrifices we have instances enough. In this war Eumolpus, the Thracian king, fell by the hands of Erectheus; and Neptune, to avenge the death of his son, struck the rocks of Macrai with his trident beneath Erectheus, who perished in the chasm.—Barnes.

- ION. What is his name? Noble he needs must be.
 CREU. Xuthus, by Æolus derived from Jove.
 ION. How weds a stranger an Athenian born?
 CREU. Eubœa is a state neighbouring on Athens.
 ION. A narrow sea flows, I have heard, between.
 CREU. Joining th' Athenian arms that state he wasted.
 ION. Confederate in the war, thence wedded thee?
 CREU. The dowral meed of war, earn'd by his spear.
 ION. Comest thou with him to Delphi, or alone?
 CREU. With him, gone now to the Trophonian shrine.
 ION. To view it, or consult the oracle?
 CREU. Both that and this, anxious for one response.
 ION. For the earth's fruits consult you, or for children?
 CREU. Though wedded long, yet childless is our bed.
 ION. Hast thou ne'er borne a child, that thou hast none?
 CREU. My state devoid of children Phœbus knows.
 ION. Blest in all else, luckless in this alone.
 CREU. But who art thou? Blest I pronounce thy mother.
 ION. Call'd, as I am, the servant of the god.
 CREU. Presented by some state, or sold to this?
 ION. I know not aught save this, I am the god's.
 CREU. And in my turn, stranger, I pity thee.

292. After the defeat of the Minyæ, their king Erginus made peace with Hercules, and wished to pass the rest of his life in the quiet enjoyment of domestic happiness. Having accumulated great wealth, his next concern was to obtain children; on this, as was usual, he consulted the oracle at Delphi: he had two sons, Trophonius and Agamedes; these became excellent Architects, and adorned Greece with many magnificent temples and palaces; they built the temple of Delphi, and a treasury for Hyrieus, in which they placed a stone in such a manner that they could remove it whenever they pleased. Hyrieus, perceiving his treasures daily diminished, placed snares around the vases which contained his silver and gold; in one of these snares Agamedes was caught: Trophonius immediately cut off his brother's head, fearing lest the torture should compel him to discover his accomplice. Trophonius was afterwards swallowed up by an opening of the earth in the grove of Lebadea, and there a temple was built to him. Pausanias gives an account of this temple, and the oracular cave, and the sacrifices required: these rites took up much time, which occasioned Xuthus at his return to ask Creusa,

Absent so long have I not caus'd thee fear?

Pausan. *Bœotic*. c. xxxix.

302. See note to the Agamemnon of Æschylus, p. 272. l. 8.

ION. As knowing not my mother, or my lineage.

CREU. Hast thou thy dwelling here, or in some house?

ION. The temple is my house, e'en when I sleep.

CREU. A child brought hither, or in riper years?

ION. An infant, as they say, who seem to know.

CREU. What Delphian dame sustain'd thee at her breast?

ION. I never knew a breast. She nourish'd me.

CREU. Who, hapless youth? Discern'd I find disease.

ION. The Priestess; as a mother I esteem her.

CREU. Who to these manly years gave thee support?

ION. The altars, and the still-succeeding strangers.

CREU. Wretched, whoe'er she be, is she that bore thee.

ION. I to some woman am perchance a shame.

CREU. Are riches thine? Thou art well habited.

ION. Graced with these vestments by the god I serve.

CREU. Hast thou made no attempt to trace thy birth?

ION. I have no token, lady, for a proof.

CREU. Ah, like thy mother doth another suffer.

ION. Who? tell me: shon'dst thou help me, what a joy.

CREU. One for whose sake I come before my husband.

ION. Say for what end, that I may serve thee, lady.

CREU. To ask a secret answer of the god.

ION. Speak it: my service shall procure the rest.

CREU. Hear then the tale: but modesty restrains me.

ION. Ah, let her not; her pow'r avails not here.

CREU. My friend then says that to th' embrace of Phœbus—

ION. A woman and the god! Say not so, stranger.

CREU. She bore a son: her father knew it not.

ION. Not so: a mortal's baseness he disdains.

CREU. This she affirms; and this, poor wretch, she suffer'd.

ION. What follow'd, if she knew the god's embrace?

CREU. The child, which hence had birth, she straight expos'd.

ION. This expos'd child, where is he, doth he live?

CREU. This no one knows; this wish I to enquire.

ION. If not alive, how probably destroy'd?

CREU. Torn, she conjectures, by some beast of prey.

ION. What ground hath she on which to build that thought?

CREU. Returning to the place she found him not.

- ION. Observ'd she drops of blood distain the path?
- CREU. None, though with anxious heed she search'd around.
- ION. What time hath past since thus the child was lost?
- CREU. Were he alive, his youth were such as thine.
- ION. The god hath done him wrong: th' unhappy mother—
- CREU. Hath not to any child been mother since.
- ION. What if in secret Phœbus nurtures him?
- CREU. Unjust t' enjoy alone a common right.
- ION. Ah me! this cruel fate accords with mine.
- CREU. For thee too thy unhappy mother mourns.
- ION. Ah, melt me not to griefs I would forget!
- CREU. I will be silent: but impart thy aid.
- ION. Seest thou what most th' enquiry will suppress?
- CREU. And to my wretched friend what is not ill!
- ION. How shall the god what he would hide reveal?
- CREU. As plac'd on the oracular seat of Greece.
- ION. The deed must cause him shame: convict him not.
- CREU. To the poor sufferer 'tis the cause of grief.
- ION. It cannot be: for who shall dare to give
The oracle? With justice would the god,
In his own dome affronted, pour on him
Severest vengeance, who should answer thee.
Desist then, lady: it becomes us ill
In opposition to the god to make
Enquiries at his shrine; by sacrifice
Before their altars, or the flight of birds,
Should we attempt to force th' unwilling gods
To utter what they wish not, 'twere th' excess
Of rudeness; what with violence we urge
'Gainst their consent would to no good avail us;
What their spontaneous grace confers on us,
That, lady, as a blessing we esteem.
- CHOR. How numberless the ills to mortal man,
And various in their form! One single blessing
By any one through life is scarcely found.
- CREU. Nor here, nor there, O Phœbus, art thou just
To her; though absent, yet her words are present.
Nor didst thou save thy son, whom it became thee

To save ; nor, though a prophet, wilt thou speak
 To the sad mother who enquires of thee ;
 That, if he is no more, to him a tomb
 May rise ; but, if he lives, that he may bless
 His mother's eyes. But even thus behoves us
 T' omit these things, if by the god denied
 To know what most I wish.—But, for I see
 The noble Xuthus this way bend, return'd
 From the Trophonian cave, before my husband
 Resume not, generous stranger, this discourse,
 Lest it might cause me shame that thus I act
 In secret, and perchance lead on to questions
 I would not have explain'd. Our hapless sex
 Oft feel our husbands' rigour ; with the bad
 The virtuous they confound, and treat us harshly.

XUTHUS, CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

XUTH. With reverence to the god my first address
 I pay ; Hail, Phœbus ! Lady, next to thee :
 Absent so long have I not caus'd thee fear ?

CREU. Not much : as anxious thoughts 'gan rise, thou'rt come.
 But, tell me, from Trophonius what reply
 Bearest thou, what means whence offspring may arise ?

XUTH. Unmeet he held it to anticipate
 The answer of the god : one thing he told me,
 That childless I should not return, nor thou,
 Home from the oracle.

CREU. Goddess rever'd,
 Mother of Phœbus, be our coming hither
 In lucky hour ; and our connubial bed
 Be by thy son made happier than before !

XUTH. It shall be so. But who is president here ?

ION. Without, that charge is mine ; within, devolv'd
 On others, stranger, seated near the tripod,
 The chiefs of Delphi these, chosen by lot.

XUTH. 'Tis well : all that I want is then complete.
 Let me now enter ; for the oracle
 Is giv'n, I hear, in common to all strangers

Before the shrine: on such a day, that falls
Propitious thus, the answer of the god
Would I receive: meanwhile these laurel boughs
Bear round the altars, lady, breathe thy pray'rs
To every god that from Apollo's shrine
I may bring back the promise of a son.

CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

- CREU. It shall, it shall be so. Should Phœbus now
At least be willing to redress the fault
Of former times, he would not through the whole
Be friendly to us: yet will I accept
What he vouchsafes us, for he is a god.
- ION. Why does this stranger always thus revile
With obscure speech the god? Is it through love
Of her, for whom she asks? or to conceal
Some secret of importance? But to me
What is the daughter of Erectheus? Nought
Concerns it me. Then let me to my task,
And sprinkle from the golden vase the dew.
Yet must I blame the god; if thus perforce
He mounts the bed of virgins, and by stealth
Becomes a father, leaving then his children
To die, regardless of them. Do not thou
Act thus; but, as thy pow'r is great, respect
The Virtues; for whoe'er of mortal men
Dares impious deeds, him the gods punish: how
Is it then just that you, who gave the laws
To mortals, should yourselves transgress those laws;
If, though it is not thus, yet will I urge
The subject, if to mortals you shall pay
The penalty of forc'd embraces, thou
Neptune, and Jove that reigns supreme in heav'n,
Will leave your temples treasureless by paying
The mulcts of your injustice; for unjust
You are, your pleasures to grave temperance
Preferring: and to men these deeds no more
Can it be just to charge as crimes, these deeds

If from the gods they imitate: on those,
Who give the ill examples, falls the charge.

CHORUS.

STRO. Thee, prompt to yield thy lenient aid,
And soothe a mother's pain;
And thee, my Pallas, martial maid,
I call; O hear the strain!
Thou, whom the Titan from the head of Jove,
Prometheus, drew, bright Victory come,
Descending from thy golden throne above,
Haste, Goddess, to the Pythian dome,
Where Phœbus from his central shrine
Gives the oracle divine,
By the raving maid repeated,
On the hallow'd tripod seated,
O haste thee, Goddess, and with thee
The daughter of Latona bring,
A virgin thou, a virgin she,
Sisters to the Delphian king;
Him, Virgins, let your vows implore,
That now his pure oracular pow'r
Will to Erectheus' ancient line declare
The blessing of a long-expected heir!

ANTIS. To mortal man this promis'd grace
Sublimest pleasure brings,
When round the father's hearth a race
In blooming lustre springs.
The wealth, the honours, from their high-drawn line
From sire to son transmitted down,
Shall with fresh glory through their offspring shine,
And brighten with increas'd renown:
A guard, when ills begin to low'r,
Dear in fortune's happier hour;
For their country's safety waking,
Firm in fight the strong spear shaking.

459. Prometheus. Against the interpretation of Barnes, see Dr. Musgrave, and note to the Furies of Æschylus, p. 408. l. 1.

More than proud wealth's exhaustless store,
 More than a monarch's bride to reign,
 The dear delight to Virtue's lore
 Careful the infant mind to train.

Doth any praise the childless state ?

The joyless, loveless life I hate :

No: my desires to moderate wealth I bound,

But let me see my children smile around.

EPOD.

Ye rustic seats, Pan's dear delight,

Ye caves of Macrai's rocky height,

Where oft the social virgins meet,

And weave the dance with nimble feet,

Descendants from Aglauros they

In the third line, with festive play

Minerva's hallow'd fane before

The verdant plain light-tripping o'er,

When thy pipe's quick-varying sound

Rings, O Pan, these caves around ;

Where, by Apollo's love betray'd,

Her child some hapless mother laid,

Expos'd to each night-prowling beast,

Or to the ravenous birds a feast :

For never have I heard it told,

Nor wrought it in historic gold,

That happiness attends the race,

When gods with mortals mix th' embrace.

ION, CHORUS.

ION.

Ye female train, that place yourselves around
 This incense-breathing temple's base, your lord
 Awaiting, hath he left the sacred tripod
 And oracle, or stays he in the shrine
 Making enquiries of his childless state ?

CHOR.

Yet in the temple, stranger, he remains.

ION.

But he comes forth, the sounding doors announce
 His near approach ; behold our lord is here.

XUTHUS, ION, CHORUS.

XUTH. Health to my son ! This first address is proper,

ION. I have my health : be in thy senses thou,
And both are well.

XUTH. O let me kiss thy hand,
And throw mine arms around thee.

ION. Art thou, stranger,
Well in thy wits ; or hath the god's displeasure
Bereft thee of thy reason ?

XUTH. Reason bids,
That which is dearest being found, to wish
A fond embrace.

ION. Off, touch me not, thy hands
Will mar the garlands of the god.

XUTH. My touch
Asserts no pledge : my own, and that most dear,
I find.

ION. Wilt thou not keep thee distant, e'er
Thou hast my arrow in thy heart ?

XUTH. Why fly me,
When thou shou'dst own what is most fond of thee ?

ION. I am not fond of curing wayward strangers,
And mad men.

XUTH. Kill me, raise my funeral pyre,
But, if thou kill me, thou wilt kill thy father.

ION. My father thou ! how so ? it makes me laugh
To hear thee.

XUTH. This my words may soon explain.

ION. What wilt thou say to me ?

XUTH. I am thy father,
And thou my son.

ION. Who declares this ?

XUTH. The god,
That nurtur'd thee, though mine.

ION. Thou to thyself
Art witness.

XUTH. By the oracle inform'd.

ION. Misled by some dark answer.

XUTH. Well I heard it.

ION. What were the words of Phœbus ?

XUTH. That who first

Should meet me—

ION. How? what meeting?

XUTH. As I pass'd

Forth from the temple.

ION. What th' event to him?

XUTH. He is my son.

ION. Born so, or by some other

Presented?

XUTH. Though a present, born my son.

ION. And didst thou first meet me?

XUTH. None else, my son.

ION. This fortune whence?

XUTH. At that we marvel both.

ION. Who is my mother?

XUTH. That I cannot say.

ION. Did not the god inform thee?

XUTH. Through my joy

For this I ask'd not.

ION. Haply from the earth

I sprung, my mother.

XUTH. No, the earth no sons

Produces.

ION. How then am I thine?

XUTH. I know not,

To Phœbus I appeal.

ION. Be this discourse

Chang'd to some other.

XUTH. This delights me most.

ION. Hast thou e'er mounted an unlawful bed?

XUTH. In foolishness of youth.

ION. Was that before

Thy marriage with the daughter of Erectheus?

XUTH. Since never.

ION. Owe I then my birth to that?

XUTH. The time agrees.

ION. How came I hither then?

XUTH. I can form no conjecture.

ION. Was I brought

From some far distant part?

XUTH. That fills my mind
With doubtful musings.

ION. Didst thou e'er before
Visit the Pythian rock?

XUTH. Once at the feast
Of Bacchus.

ION. By some public host receiv'd?

XUTH. Who with the Delphian Damsels—

ION. To the orgies
Led thee, or how?

XUTH. And with the Mænades
Of Bacchus—

ION. In the temperate hour, or warm
With wine?

XUTH. Amidst the revels of the god.

ION. From thence I date my birth.

XUTH. And fate, my son,
Hath found thee.

ION. How then came I to the temple?

XUTH. Perchance expos'd.

ION. The state of servitude
Have I escaped.

XUTH. Thy father now, my son,
Receive.

ION. Indecent were it in the god
Not to confide.

XUTH. Thy thoughts are just.

ION. What else
Would we?

XUTH. Thou seest what thou oughtest to see.

ION. Am I the son then of the son of Jove?

XUTH. Such is thy fortune.

ION. Those that gave me birth
Do I embrace?

XUTH. Obedient to the god.

ION. My father, hail !

XUTH. That dear name I accept

With joy.

ION. This present day—

XUTH. Hath made me happy.

ION. O my dear mother, when shall I behold
Thy face ? Whoe'er thou art, more wish I now
To see thee, than before ; but thou perchance
Art dead, and nothing our desires avail.

CHOR. We in the blessings of your house rejoice.
Yet wish we that our mistress too were happy
In children, and the lineage of Erectheus.

XUTH. Well hath the god accomplish'd this, my son,
Discovering thee, well hath he join'd thee to me ;
And thou hast found the most endearing ties,
To which, before this hour, thou wast a stranger.
And the warm wish, which thou hast well conceiv'd,
Is likewise mine, that thou may'st find thy mother ;
I from what woman thou derivest thy birth.
This left to time may haply be discover'd.
Now quit this hallow'd earth, the god no more
Attending, and to mine accord thy mind,
To visit Athens, where thy father's sceptre,
No mean one, waits thee, and abundant wealth.
Nor, though thou grieve one parent yet unknown,
Shalt thou be censur'd as ignobly born,
Or poor : no, thou art noble, and thy state
Adorn'd with rich possessions. Thou art silent.
Why is thine eye thus fix'd upon the ground ?
Why on thy brow that cloud ? The smile of joy
Vanish'd, thou strikest thy father's heart with fear.

598. *The god no more attending.* Our thanks are due to those learned men who replace *λατρείαν* or *Θητείαν* here: the passages, to which Dr. Musgrave appeals as authorities for retaining *ἀλητείαν*, are wide from the point. The Chorus thought Ion of foreign birth, and therefore might well have spoken of him in such terms ; but Xuthus had reason to think that his mother was a Delphian ; he certainly did think so ; and, as the youth had never quitted that state, he could not with any propriety call his attendance in the temple of Delphi *ἀλητείαν*, wandering or exile.

ION. Far other things appear when nigh, than seen
At distance. I indeed embrace my fortune,
In thee my father found. But hear what now
Wakes sad reflections. Proud of their high race
Are your Athenians, natives of the land,
Not drawn from foreign lineage: I to them
Shall come unwelcome, in two points defective,
My father not a native, and myself
Of spurious birth: loaded with this reproach,
If destitute of pow'r, I shall be held
Abject and worthless: should I rush amongst
The highest order of the state, and wish
T' appear important, inferior ranks
Will hate me; aught above them gives disgust.
The good, the wise, men form'd to serve the state,
Are silent, nor at public honours aim
Too hastily: by such, were I not quiet
In such a bustling state, I should be deem'd
Ridiculous, and proverb'd for a fool.
Should I attain the dignity of those,
Whose approv'd worth hath rais'd them to the height
Of public honours, by such suffrage more
Should I be watch'd; for they, that hold in states
Rule and preeminence, bear hostile minds
To all that vie with them. And should I come
To a strange house a stranger, to a woman
Childless herself, who that misfortune shar'd
Before with thee, now sees it her sole lot,
And feels it bitterly, would she not hate me,
And that with justice? When I stand before thee,
With what an eye would she, who hath no child,
Look on thy child? In tenderness to her,
Thy wife, thou must forsake me, or embroil
Thy house in discord, if thou favour me.
What murderous means, what poisonous drugs for men
Have women with inventive rage prepared?
Besides, I have much pity for thy wife,
Now growing old without a child, that grief

Unmerited, the last of her high race,
 Th' exterior face indeed of royalty,
 So causelessly commended, hath its brightness ;
 Within, all gloom : for what sweet peace of mind,
 What happiness is his, whose years are passed
 In comfortless suspicion, and the dread
 Of violence ? Be mine the humble blessings
 Of private life, rather than be a king,
 From the flagitious forced to choose my friends,
 And hate the virtuous, through the fear of death.
 Gold, thou may'st tell me, hath o'er things like these
 A sovereign pow'r, and riches give delight :
 I have no pleasure in this noisy pomp,
 Nor, whilst I guard my riches, in the toil.
 Be mine a modest mean that knows not care.
 And now, my father, hear the happy state
 I here enjoy'd ; and first, to mortal man
 That dearest blessing, leisure, and no bustle
 To cause disturbance : me no ruffian force
 Shov'd from the way ; it is not to be borne
 When every insolent and worthless wretch
 Makes you give place ; the worship of the god
 Employ'd my life, or, no unpleasing task,
 Service to men well pleas'd ; the parting guest
 I bade farewell ; welcom'd the new-arriv'd.
 Thus something always new made every hour
 Glide sweetly on : and, to the human mind
 That dearest wish, though some regard it not,
 To be, what duty and my nature made me,
 Just to the god : revolving this, my father,
 I wish not for thy Athens to exchange
 This state ; permit me to myself to live :
 Dear to the mind the pleasures that arise
 From humble life, as those which greatness brings.

CHOR. Well hast thou said, if those, whom my soul holds
 Most dear, shall in thy words find happiness.

XUTH. No more of this discourse, learn to be happy.
 It is my will that thou begin it here,

Where first I found thee, son : a general feast
 Will I provide, and make a sacrifice,
 Which at thy birth I made not ; at my table
 Will I receive thee as a welcome guest,
 And cheer thee with the banquet, then conduct thee
 To Athens with me as a visitant,
 Not as my son : for 'midst my happiness
 I would not grieve my wife, who hath no child.
 But I will watch th' occasions time may bring,
 And so present thee, and obtain her leave
 That thou may'st hold the sceptre which I bear.
 Ion I name thee, as befits thy fortune,
 As first thou met'st me from the hallow'd shrine
 As I came forth : assemble then thy friends,
 Invite them all to share the joyful feast,
 Since thou art soon to leave the Delphic state.
 And you, ye females, keep, I charge you keep
 This secret ; she that tells my wife shall die.

ION. Let us then go ; yet one thing to my fortune
 Is wanting ; if I find not her that bore me,
 Life hath no joy : might I indulge a wish,
 It were to find her an Athenian dame,
 That from my mother I might dare t' assume
 Some confidence ; for he, whose fortune leads him
 To a free state proud of their unmix'd race,
 Though call'd a citizen, must close his lips
 With servile awe, for freedom is not his.

CHORUS.

STRO. Yes, sisters, yes, the streaming eye,
 The swelling heart I see, the bursting sigh,
 When thus rejoicing in his son
 Our queen her royal lord shall find,
 And give to grief her anguish'd mind,
 Afflicted, childless, and alone.

What means this voice divine,
 Son of Latona, fate-declaring pow'r ?
 Whence is this youth, so fondly grac'd,

That to ripe manhood from his infant hour
 Hath in thy hallow'd courts been plac'd,
 And nurtur'd at thy shrine?
 Thy dark reply delights not me;
 Lurking beneath close fraud I see:
 Where will this end? I fear, I fear——

'Tis strange, and strange events must hence ensue:
 But grateful sounds it to his ear.
 The youth, that in another's state
 (Who sees not that my words are true?)

Enjoys the fraud, and triumphs in his fate.

ANTIS. Say, sisters, say, with duteous zeal
 Shall we this secret to our qucen reveal?

She to her royal lord resign'd,
 With equal hope, with equal care,
 Form'd her his joys, his griefs to share,
 And gave him all her willing mind.

But joys are his alone;

Whilst she, poor mourner, with a weight of woes,
 To hoary age advancing, bends;

He the bright smile of prosp'rous fortune knows.
 E'en thus, unhonour'd by his friends,

Plac'd on another's throne
 Mischance and ruin on him wait,
 Who fails to guard its happy state.
 Him may mischance and ruin seize,

Who round my lov'd queen spreads his wily trains:

No god may his oblation please,
 No favouring flame to him ascend!
 To her my faith, my zeal remains,

Known to her ancient royal house a friend.

EPOD. Now the new father and the new-found son
 The festive table haste to spread,

Where to the skies Parnassus lifts his head,
 And deep beneath the hanging stone
 Forms in its rudely-rifted side

A cavern wild and wide:

Where Bacchus, shaking high his midnight flames,

In many a light fantastic round
 Dances o'er the craggy ground,
 And revels with his frenetic dames.
 Ne'er to my city let him come,
 This youth; no, rather let him die,
 And sink into an early tomb!

With an indignant eye
 Athens would view the stranger's pride
 Within her gates triumphant ride;
 Enough for her the honour'd race that springs
 From old Eretheus and her line of kings.

CREUSA, TUTOR, CHORUS.

CREU. Thou venerable man, whose guiding voice
 My father, whilst he liv'd, rever'd, advance
 Up to th' oracular seat thy aged steps;
 That, if the royal Phœbus should pronounce
 Promise of offspring, thou with me may'st share
 The joy; for pleasing is it when with friends
 Good fortune we receive: if aught of ill,
 Avert it heav'n! befalls, a friend's kind eye
 Beams comfort; thee, as once thou didst revere
 My father, though thy queen I now revere.

TUT. In thee, my child, the nobleness of manners,
 Which grac'd thy royal ancestors, yet lives;
 Thou never wilt disgrace thy high-born lineage.
 Lead me then, lead me to the shrine, support me,
 High is th' oracular seat, and steep th' ascent;
 Be thou assistant to the foot of age.

CREU. Follow; be heedful where thou set thy steps.

TUT. I am: my foot is slow, my heart hath wings.

CREU. Fix thy staff firm on this loose-rolling ground.

TUT. That hath no eyes; and dim indeed my sight.

CREU. Well hast thou said: on cheerful then, and faint not.

TUT. I have the will, but o'er constraint no pow'r.

CREU. Ye females on my richly-broider'd works
 Faithful attendants, say, respecting children
 For which we came, what fortune hath my lord

Borne hence? If good, declare it; you shall find
That to no thankless masters you give joy.

CHOR. O fortune!

CREU. To thy speech this is a poem
Not tuned to happiness.

CHOR. Unhappy fortune!

But why distress me for the oracle
Giv'n to our lords! Be that as fate requires.

In things, which threaten death, what shall we do?

CREU. What means this strain of woe? Whence are these fears?

CHOR. What, shall we speak, or bury this in silence?

CREU. Speak, though thy words bring wretchedness to me.

CHOR. It shall be spoken, were I twice to die.

To thee, my queen, it is not giv'n to clasp
In thy fond arms a child, or at thy breast
To hold it.

TUT. O my child, would I were dead!

CREU. Yes, this is wretchedness indeed, a grief
That makes life joyless.

TUT. This is ruin to us.

CREU. Unhappy me! this is a piercing grief,
That rends my heart with anguish.

TUT. Groan not yet.

CREU. Yet is th' affliction present.

TUT. Till we learn—

CREU. To me what tidings?

TUT. If a common fate
Await our lord, partaker of thy griefs,
Or thou alone art thus unfortunate.

CHOR. To him, old man, the god hath giv'n a son,
And happiness is his unknown to her.

CREU. To ill this adds the deepest ill, a grief
For me to mourn.

TUT. Born of some other woman
Is this child yet to come, or did the god
Declare one now in being?

CHOR. One advanc'd
To manhood's prime he gave him: I was present.

CREU. What hast thou said ? Thy words denounce to me
Sorrows past speech, past utterance.

TUT. And to me.

CREU. How was this oracle accomplish'd ? Tell me
With clearest circumstance : who is this youth ?

CHOR. Him as a son Apollo gave, whom first
Departing from the god thy lord should meet.

CREU. O my unhappy fate ! I then am left
Childless to pass my life, childless, alone,
Amidst my lonely house. Who was declared ?
Whom did the husband of this wretch first meet ?
How meet him ? Where behold him ? Tell me all.

CHOR. Dost thou, my honour'd mistress, call to mind
The youth that swept the temple ? This is he.

CREU. O, through the liquid air that I could fly
Far, from the land of Greece, e'en to the stars
Fix'd in the western sky ! Ah me, what grief,
What piercing grief is mine !

TUT. Say by what name
Did he address his son, if thou hast heard it ;
Or does it rest in silence, yet unknown ?

CHOR. Ion : for that he first advanc'd to meet him.

TUT. And of what mother ?

CHOR. That I could not learn :
Abrupt was his departure (to inform thee
Of all I know, old man) to sacrifice
With hospitable rites, a birth-day feast,
And in the hallow'd cave, from her apart,
With his new son to share the common banquet.

TUT. Lady, we by thy husband are betray'd,
For I with thee am griev'd, with contrived fraud
Insulted, from thy father's house cast forth :
I speak not this in hatred to thy lord,
But that I love thee more ; a stranger he
Came to the city and thy royal house,
And wedded thee, all thy inheritance
Receiving : by some other woman now
Discover'd to have children privately :

How privately, I'll tell thee; when he saw
Thou hadst no child, it pleas'd him not to bear
A fate like thine; but by some favourite slave,
His paramour by stealth, he hath a son.
Him to some Delphian gave he, distant far
To educate; who to this sacred house
Consign'd, as secret here, receiv'd his nurture.
He knowing this, and that his son advanc'd
To manhood, urg'd thee to attend him hither,
Pleading thy childless state. Nor hath the god
Deceiv'd thee; he deceiv'd thee, and long since
Contriv'd this wily plan to rear his son.
That, if convicted, he might charge the god,
Himself excusing: should the fraud succeed,
He would observe the times when he might safely
Consign to him the empire of thy land.
And this new name was at his leisure form'd,
Ion, for that he came by chance to meet him.
Chorus. I hate those ill-designing men, that form
Plans of injustice, and then gild them over
With artificial ornament: to me
Far dearer is the honest simple friend,
Than one, whose quicker wit is train'd to ill.
Ion. And to complete this fraud, thou shalt be urg'd
To take into thy house, to lord it there,
This low-born youth, this offspring of a slave.
Though ill, it had been open, had he pleaded
Thy want of children, and, thy leave obtain'd,
Brought to thy house a son that could have boasted
His mother noble, or, if that displeas'd thee,
He might have sought a wife from Æolus.
Behoves thee then to act a woman's part,
Or grasp the sword, or drug the poison'd bowl,
Or plan some deep design to kill thy husband,
And this his son, before thou find thy death
From them: if thou delay, thy life is lost.
For when beneath one roof two foes are met,
The one must perish. I with ready zeal

Will aid thee in this work, and kill the youth,
 Entering the grot where he prepares the feast;
 Indifferent in my choice, so that I pay
 What to my lords I owe, to live or die.
 If there is aught that causes slaves to blush,
 It is the name; in all else than the free
 The slave is nothing worse, if he be virtuous.

CHOR. I too, my honour'd queen, with cheerful mind
 Will share thy fate, or die, or live with honour.

CREU. How, O my soul, shall I be silent? How
 Disclose this secret? Can I bid farewell
 To modesty? What else restrains my tongue?
 To how severe a trial am I brought?
 Hath not my husband wrong'd me? Of my house
 I am deprived, deprived of children; hope
 Is vanish'd, which my heart could not resign,
 With many an honest wish this furtive bed
 Concealing, this lamented bed concealing.
 But by the star-bespangled throne of Jove,
 And by the goddess high above my rocks
 Enshrined, by the moist banks that bend around
 The hallow'd lake by Triton form'd, no longer
 Will I conceal this bed, but ease my breast,
 Th' oppressive load discharg'd. Mine eyes drop tears,
 My soul is rent, to wretchedness ensnar'd
 By men, by gods, whom I will now disclose,
 Unkind betrayers of the beds they forced.
 O thou, that wakest on thy sev'n-string'd lyre
 Sweet notes, that from the rustic lifeless horn
 Enchant the ear with heavenly melody,
 Son of Latona, thee before this light
 Will I reprove. Thou camest to me, with gold
 Thy locks all glittering, as the vermeil flow'rs
 I gather'd in my vest to deck my bosom
 With the spring's glowing hues: in my white hand
 Thy hand enlocking, to the cavern'd rock
 Thou ledd'st me; nought avail'd my cries that call'd
 My mother: on thou ledd'st me, wanton god,

Immodestly, to Venus paying homage.
 A son I bear thee, O my wretched fate !
 Him, for I fear'd my mother, in thy cave
 I placed, where I unhappy was undone
 By thy unhappy love. Woe, woe is me,
 And now my son and thine, ill-fated babe,
 Is rent by ravenous vultures; thou meanwhile
 Art to thy lyre attuning strains of joy.
 Son of Latona, thee I call aloud,
 Who from thy golden seat, thy central throne,
 Utterest thine oracle: my voice shall reach
 Thine ear: ungrateful lover, to my husband,
 No grace requiting, thou hast giv'n a son
 To bless his house; my son and thine, unown'd,
 Perish'd a prey to birds; the robes that wrapp'd
 The infant's limbs, his mother's work, lost with him.
 Delos abhors thee, and the laurel boughs
 With the soft foliage of the palm o'erhung,
 Grasping whose round trunk with her hands divine
 Latona thee, her hallow'd offspring, bore.

CHOR. Ah, what a mighty treasury of ills

Is open'd here, a copious source of tears !

TUT. Never, my daughter, can I sate mine eyes

With looking on thy face; astonishment

Bears me beyond my senses. I had stemm'd

One tide of evils, when another flood

High-surfing overwhelm'd me from the words

Which thou hast utter'd, from the present ills

To an ill train of other woes transferr'd.

What say'st thou? Of what charge dost thou implead

The god? what son hast thou brought forth? Where

A feast for vultures? Tell me all again. [plac'd him

953. This tree was by various nations esteemed an emblem of honour, and even of royalty. The Jews used to carry boughs of it at some of their festivals; and particularly at the celebration of their nuptials: and it was thought to have an influence at the birth. Euripides alludes to this in his *Ion*, where he makes Latona recline herself against a palm tree, when she is going to produce Apollo and Diana. Bryant's *Analysis*, vol. i. p. 321.

- CREU. Though I must blush, old man, yet I will speak.
 TUT. I mourn with generous grief at a friend's woes.
 CREU. Hear then : the northward-pointing cave thou knowest,
 And the Cecropian rocks, which we call Macrai.
 TUT. Where stands a shrine to Pan, and altars nigh.
 CREU. There in a dreadful conflict I engaged.
 TUT. What? my tears rise ready to meet thy words.
 CREU. By Phœbus drawn reluctant to his bed.
 TUT. Was this, my daughter, such as I suppose?
 CREU. I know not: but if truth, I will confess it.
 TUT. Didst thou in silence mourn this secret ill?
 CREU. This was the grief I now disclose to thee.
 TUT. This love of Phœbus how didst thou conceal?
 CREU. I bore a son. Hear me, old man, with patience.
 TUT. Where? who assisted? or wast thou alone?
 CREU. Alone, in the same cavern where compress'd.
 TUT. Where is thy son, that childless now no more——
 CREU. Dead, good old man, to beasts of prey expos'd.
 TUT. Dead! and th' ungrateful Phœbus give no aid!
 CREU. None: in the house of Pluto a young guest.
 TUT. Whose hands exposed him? Surely not thine own.
 CREU. Mine, in the shades of night, wrapt in his vests.
 TUT. Hadst thou none with thee conscious to this deed?
 CREU. My misery, and the secret place alone.
 TUT. How durst thou in the cavern leave thy son?
 CREU. How? uttering many sad and plaintive words.
 TUT. Ah, cruel was thy deed, the god more cruel.
 CREU. Hadst thou but seen him stretch his little hands!
 TUT. Seeking the breast, or reaching to thy arms?
 CREU. To this, depriv'd of which he suffer'd wrong.
 TUT. And what induc'd thee to expose thy child?
 CREU. Hope that the god's kind care would save his son.
 TUT. How are the glories of thy house destroy'd!
 CREU. Why, thine head cover'd, dost thou pour these tears?
 TUT. To see thee and thy father thus unhappy.
 CREU. This is the state of man: nothing stands firm.

996. To this, *ἐν τῷ Σ'*, pointing to her breast. The translator is indebted to Mr. Jodrell for this fine observation.

- TUT. No longer then, my child, let grief oppress us.
CREU. What should I do? In misery all is doubt.
TUT. First on the god that wrong'd thee be aveng'd.
CREU. How shall a mortal 'gainst a god prevail?
TUT. Set this rever'd oracular shrine on fire.
CREU. I fear: e'en now I have enough of ills.
TUT. Attempt what may be done then; kill thy husband.
CREU. The nuptial bed I reverence, and his goodness.
TUT. This son then, which is now brought forth against thee.
CREU. How? Could that be, how warmly should I wish it.
TUT. Thy train hath swords; instruct them to the deed.
CREU. I go with speed: but where shall it be done?
TUT. In th' hallow'd tent, where now he feasts his friends.
CREU. An open murder, and with coward slaves!
TUT. If mine displease, propose thou some design.
CREU. I have it, close, and easy to achieve.
TUT. In both my faithful services are thine.
CREU. Hear then: not strange to thee the giants' war.
TUT. When they in Phlegra fought against the gods.
CREU. There th'earth brought forth the Gorgon, horrid monster.
TUT. In succour of her sons t'annoy the gods?
CREU. E'en so: her Pallas slew, daughter of Jove.
TUT. What fierce and dreadful form did she then wear?
CREU. Her breast-plate arm'd with vipers wreath'd around.
TUT. A well-known story, often have I heard it.
CREU. Her spoils before her breast Minerva wore.
TUT. The Ægis; so they call the vest of Pallas.
CREU. So nam'd, when in the war she join'd the gods.
TUT. But how can this, my child, annoy thy foes?
CREU. Thou canst not but remember Erichthonius.
TUT. Whom first of thy high race the earth brought forth.
CREU. To him, while yet an infant, Pallas gave—
TUT. What? Thy slow preface raises expectation.
CREU. Two drops of blood that from the Gorgon fell.
TUT. And on the human frame what pow'r have these?
CREU. The one works death, the other heals disease.
TUT. In what around the infant's body hung?
CREU. Inclos'd in gold: he gave them to my father.

TUT. At his decease then they devolv'd to thee?

CREU. Aye: and I wear it as a bracelet; look.

TUT. Their double qualities how temper'd, say.

CREU. This drop, which from her hollow vein distill'd,

TUT. To what effect applied? What is its pow'r?

CREU. Medicinal, of sovereign use to life.

TUT. The other drop, what faculties hath that?

CREU. It kills, the poison of the Gorgon dragons.

TUT. And dost thou bear this gore blended in one?

CREU. No, separate; for with ill good mixes not.

TUT. O my dear child, thou hast whate'er we want.

CREU. With this the boy shall die, and thou shalt kill him.

TUT. Where? How? 'Tis thine to speak, to dare be mine.

CREU. At Athens, when he comes beneath my roof.

TUT. I like not this; what I propos'd displeas'd.

CREU. Dost thou surmise what enters now my thoughts.

TUT. Suspicion waits thee, though thou kill him not.

CREU. Thou hast judg'd well: a stepdame's hate is proverb'd.

TUT. Then kill him here; thou may'st disown the deed.

CREU. My mind e'en now anticipates the pleasure.

TUT. Thus shalt thou meet thy husband's wiles with wiles.

CREU. This shalt thou do: this little golden casket

Take from my hand, Minerva's gift of old;

To where my husband secretly prepares

The sacrifice, bear this beneath thy vest,

That, supper ended, when they are to pour

Libations to the gods, thou may'st infuse

In the youth's goblet this: but take good heed,

Let none observe thee; drug his cup alone

Who thinks to lord it in my house: if once

It pass his lips, his foot shall never reach

Illustrious Athens: death awaits him here.

59 TUT. Go thou then to the hospitable house

Prepared for thy reception: be it mine,

Obedient to thy word, to do this deed.

Come then, my aged foot, be once more young

In act, though not in years, for past recall

That time is fled: kill him, and bear him forth.

Well may the prosperous harbour virtuous thought;
 But when thou wou'dst avenge thee on thy foes,
 There is no law of weight to hinder thee.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Daughter of Ceres, Trivia, hear,
 Propitious regent of each public way
 Amidst the brightness of the day,
 Nor less when night's dark hour engenders fear:
 The fullness of this goblet guide
 To check with death this stripling's pride,
 For whom my queen this fatal draught prepares,
 Ting'd with the Gorgon's venom'd gore:
 That seat, which 'midst Erectheus' royal heirs
 His pride claims, it shall claim no more:
 Never may one of alien blood disgrace
 Th' imperial honours of that high-born race!

ANTIS. 1. Should not this work of fate succeed,
 Nor the just vengeance of my queen prevail,
 Should this apt time of daring fail,
 And Hope, that flatters now, desert the deed;
 Slaughter shall other means afford,
 The strangling cord, the piercing sword;
 For rage from disappointed rage shall flow,
 And try each various form of death:
 For never shall my queen this torment know,
 Ne'er, whilst she draws this vital breath,
 Brook in her house that foreign lords should shine,
 Cloth'd with the splendors of her ancient line.

STRO. 2. Thou, whom the various hymn delights,
 When thy bright choir of beauteous dames among,
 Dancing the stream's soft brink along,
 Thou seest the guardian of thy mystic rites,
 Thy torch its midnight vigils keep,

1106, &c. The Chorus in this Strophe marks the sacred magnificence of Athens by the celebration of the mysteries of Bacchus, Proserpine, and Ceres, in common on the 20th day of August, implied in the word *εὐχάδων*.

Thine eye mean time disdaining sleep;
 Whilst with thee dances Jove's star-spangled plain,
 And the moon dances up the sky;
 Ye nymphs, that lead to grots your frolic train,
 Beneath the gulfy founts that lie:
 Thougold-crown'd queen through night's dark regions
 And thou, her mother, pow'r rever'd, [fear'd,
 How should I blush to see this youth unknown,
 This Delphic vagrant hope to seize the throne!

ANTIS. 2. You, who, the melting soul to move,
 In loose, dishonest airs the Muse employ
 To celebrate love's wanton joy,
 The joy of unallow'd, unholy love,
 See how our pure and modest law
 Can lavish man's lewd deeds o'er-awe!
 Ye shameless bards, revoke each wanton air,
 No more these melting measures frame;
 Bid the chaste Muse in Virtue's cause declare,
 And mark man's lawless bed with shame!
 Ungrateful is this Jove-descended lord,
 For, his wife's childless bed abhorr'd,
 Lewdly he courts th' embrace of other dames,
 And with a spurious son his pride inflames.

ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

ATT. Athenian dames, where shall I find our queen,
 The daughter of Eretheus? Seeking her
 This city have I walk'd around in vain.

CHOR. And for what cause, my fellow slave? What means
 Thy hasty foot? What tidings dost thou bring?

ATT. We are discover'd: and the rulers here
 Seek her, that she may die o'erwhelm'd with stones.

CHOR. Ah me, what wou'dst thou say? Are our designs
 Of secret ruin to this youth disclosed?

ATT. They are; and know, the worst of ills await you.

CHOR. How were our dark devices brought to light?

ATT. The god, that justice might receive no stain,
 Caus'd it to triumph o'er defeated wrong.

- CHOR. How ? as a suppliant I conjure thee tell me :
Of this inform'd, if we must die, more freely
Wish we to die, than see the light of heav'n.
- ATT. Soon as the husband of Creusa left
The god's oracular shrine, this new-found son
He to the feast, and sacrifice prepar'd
To the high gods, led with him. Xuthus then
Went where the hallow'd flame of Bacchus mounts,
That on each rock's high point the victim's blood
Might flow, a grateful offering for his son
Thus recogniz'd, to whom he gave in charge,
" Stay thou, and with the artist's expert aid
" Erect the sheltering tent; my rites perform'd
" To the kind gods that o'er the genial bed
" Preside, should I be there detain'd too long,
" Spread the rich table to my present friends."
This said, he led the victims to the rocks.
Meanwhile with reverent heed the son 'gan rear
On firm supporters the wide tent, whose sides
No masonry require, yet framed t' exclude
The mid-day sun's hot beams, or his last rays
When sinking in the west: the lengthened lines
Equally distant comprehend a square
Of twice five thousand feet, the skilful thus
Compute it, space to feast, for so he will'd,
All Delphi: from the treasures of the god
He took the sacred tapestry, and around
Hung the rich shade, on which th' admiring eye
Gazes with fix'd delight: first over head
Like a broad pennon spread th' extended woof,
Which from th' Amazonian spoils the son
Of Jove, Alcides, hallow'd to the god;
In its bright texture interwoven a sky

1169. *Μυρίων ποδῶν ἀριθμὸν* is a definite number, *ὡς λέγουσιν οἱ σοφοὶ* would otherwise be impertinent; a square, whose sides are an hundred feet each, gives an area of ten thousand feet. Dr. Musgrave observes, that the capacity of this tent is thus accurately described, because the temple of Minerva on the Acropolis of Athens was of the same form and dimensions.

Gathering the stars in its ethereal round,
 Whilst downward to the western wave the sun
 His steeds declines, and to his station high
 Draws up the radiant flame of Hesperus.
 Meanwhile the Night, robed in her sable stole,
 Her unrein'd car advances; on her state
 The stars attend; the Pleiads mounting high,
 And with his glittering sword Orion arm'd;
 Above, Arcturus to the golden pole
 Inclines; full-orb'd the month-dividing moon
 Takes her bright station, and the Hyades
 Mark'd by the sailor; distant in the rear
 Aurora, ready to relume the day.
 And put the stars to flight. The sides were grac'd
 With various textures of th' historic woof,
 Barbaric arguments; in gallant trim
 Against the fleet of Greece the hostile fleet
 Rides proudly on: Here monstrous forms portray'd
 Human and brutal mix'd: the Thracian steeds
 Are seiz'd, the hinds, and the adventurous chace
 Of savage lions: figur'd nigh the doors
 Cecrops, attended by his daughters, roll'd
 His serpent train: in th' ample space within
 He spread the festal table, richly deck'd
 With golden goblets. Now the herald walk'd
 His round, each native, that inclined to grace
 The feast, inviting; to the crowded tent
 They hasten crown'd with garlands, and partake
 The exquisite repast; the pleased sense
 Now satiate, in the midst an old man stood,

1196. Barnes, and after him Dr. Musgrave, understands this as designing the sea-fight against the Persians, off Salamis, per prolepsim. We cannot imagine the poet guilty of such an Anachronism as in the time of Xuthus to mention this recent event, and among the labours of Hercules. What would his audience have thought of Shakespeare, had he made one of Henry the Fifth's Captains speak of the defeat of the Spanish Armada before the battle of Agincourt? This naval expedition must relate to Hercules, and probably alludes to the ships which Æetes sent against the Argonauts.

Officious in his ministry, which rais'd
 Much mirth among the guests; for from the urns
 He fill'd the lavers, and with fragrant myrrh
 Incens'd the place; the golden bowls he claim'd
 His charge: when now the jocund pipes 'gan breathe
 Harmonious airs, and the fresh goblet stood
 Ready to walk its round, the old man said,
 Away with these penurious cups, and bring
 Capacious bowls, so shall you quickly bathe
 Your spirits in delight: with speed were brought
 Goblets of gold and silver; one he took
 Of choicer frame, and seemingly intent
 To do his young lord honour, the full vase
 Gave to his hands, but in the wine infused
 A drug of poisonous pow'r, which, it is said,
 His queen supplied, that the new son no more
 Might view the light of heav'n; but unobserv'd
 He mix'd it: as the youth among the rest
 Pour'd the libation, 'midst th' attendant slaves
 Words of reproach one utter'd; he, as train'd
 Within the temple and with expert seers,
 Deem'd them of evil omen, and requir'd
 Another goblet to be fill'd afresh:
 The former, a libation to the god,
 He cast upon the ground, instructing all
 To pour, like him, th' untasted liquor down.
 Silence ensued: the sacred bowls we fill
 With wine of Byblos; when a troop of doves
 Came fluttering in, for undisturb'd they haunt
 The dome of Phœbus; in the floating wine
 They dipp'd their bills to drink, then rais'd their heads
 Gurgling it down their beauteous-plumed throats:
 Harmless to all the spilt wine, save to her
 That lighted where the youth had pour'd his bowl;
 She drank, and straight convulsive shiverings seiz'd

1210. *Which rais'd much mirth.* This was usually assigned to the most beautiful youths. See Homer Il. i. where Vulcan, by taking upon him the office of Hebe or Ganymede, raises the mirth of the gods.

Her beauteous plumes, around in giddy rings
She whirl'd, and in a strange and mournful note
Seem'd to lament : amazement seiz'd the guests
Seeing the poor bird's pangs ; her heart heav'd thick,
And stretching out her scarlet legs she died.
Rending his robes the son by Phœbus given
Sprung from the table, and aloud exclaim'd,
What wretch design'd to kill me ? Speak, old man,
Officious was thy ministry ; the bowl
I from thy hand receiv'd : then straight he seiz'd
His aged arm, and to the question held him
As in the fact discover'd : he thus caught,
Reluctant and constrain'd, own'd the bold deed,
The deadly goblet by Creusa drug'd.
Forth from the tent, the guests attending, rush'd
The youth announc'd by Phœbus, and amidst
The Pythian regents says, O hallow'd land,
This stranger dame, this daughter of Erectheus
Attempts my life by poison. Then decreed
The Delphian lords, nor did one voice dissent,
That she should die, my mistress, from the rock
Cast headlong, as the deed was aim'd against
A sacred life, and impiously presumed
This hallow'd place with murder to profane.
Demanded by the state she this way bends
Her wretched steps. Unhappy, to this shrine
She came through fond desire of children, here
Together with her hopes her life is lost.

CHOR. None, there is none, from death no flight,
To me no refuge ; our dark deed
Betray'd, betray'd to open light ;
The festive bowl, with sprightly wine that flow'd
Mix'd with the Gorgon's viperous blood,
An offering to the dead decreed,
All is betray'd to light, and I
Cast headlong from the rock must die.
What flight shall save me from this death,
Borne on swift pinions through the air,

Sunk to the darksome cave beneath,
 Or mounted on the rapid car?
 Or shall the flying bark unfurl its sails?
 Alas, my queen, no flight avails,
 Save when some god's auspicious pow'r
 Shall snatch us from the dangerous hour.
 Unhappy queen, what pangs shall rend thy heart?
 Shall we, who plann'd the deathful deed,
 Be caught within the toils we spread,
 Whilst Justice claims severe her chastening part?

CREUSA, CHORUS.

CREU. I am pursued, ye faithful females, doom'd
 To death: the Pythian council hath decreed it;
 My life is forfeited.

CHOR. Unhappy lady,
 We know the dreadful ills that close thee round.

CREU. Ah, whither shall I fly? from instant death
 Scarce hath my foot sped hither: from my foes
 By stealth escaping.

CHOR. Whither wou'dst thou fly,
 But to this altar?

CREU. What will that avail me?

CHOR. To kill a suppliant there the law forbids.

CREU. But by the law I perish.

CHOR. If their hands
 Had seiz'd thee.

CREU. Dreadful contest, with drawn swords
 They hastily advance.

CHOR. Now take thy seat
 At th' altar; shou'dst thou die e'en there, thy blood
 Will call the vengeance of the god on those
 That spilt it: but our fortune we must bear.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION. Bull-visag'd sire Cephisus, what a viper

1308. Cephisus was the father of Diogenæa, who married Phrasimus, and bore to him Praxithea the wife of Erectheus, and mother of Creusa. Barnes. Much

- Hast thou produced, a dragon, from her eyes
 Glaring pernicious flame? Each daring deed
 Is hers: less venomous the Gorgon's blood
 With which she purpos'd to have poison'd me.
 1288 Seize her, that the Parnassian rocks may tease
 Those nice adjusted ringlets of her hair,
 1289 —As down the craggy precipice she bounds.
 Here my good genius saved me, e'er I came
 To Athens, there beneath my stepdame's wiles
 To fall; amidst my friends thy fell intents
 Have I unravell'd, what a pest to me,
 Thy hate how deadly: had thy toils inclosed me
 In thine own house, thou wou'dst at once have sent me
 With complete ruin to the shades below.
 1290 —But nor the altar, nor Apollo's shrine
 Shall save thee. Pity, might her voice be heard,
 Would rather plead for me and for my mother,
 1291 She absent, yet the name remains with me.
 1292 Behold that sorceress; with what art she wove
 Wile after wile; the altar of the god
 Impress'd her not with awe, as if secure.
 No vengeance waited her unhallow'd deeds.
 CREU. I charge thee, kill me not, in my own right,
 And in the god's, whose suppliant here I stand.
 ION. What right hast thou to plead Apollo's name?
 CREU. My person hallow'd to the god I offer.
 ION. Yet wou'dst thou poison one that is the god's.
 CREU. Thou wast no more Apollo's, but thy father's.
 ION. I have been, of a father's wealth I speak.
 CREU. And I now am: thou hast that claim no more.
 ION. But thou art impious: pious were my deeds.
 CREU. As hostile to my house I would have kill'd thee.
 ION. Did I against thy country march in arms?
 CREU. And more; thou wou'dst have fired Erectheus' house.

good learning hath been ill employed to shew the causes which induced the ancients so uniformly to describe their great rivers under the image of a Bull. To us the idea seems forced, and the expression inelegant: but the faith of translation is obliged to retain them.

ION. What torch, what brands, what flames had I prepared?

CREU. 'There wou'dst thou fix, seizing my right by force.

ION. The land, which he possess'd, my father gave me.

CREU. What claim hath there the race of Æolus?

ION. He was its guardian, not with words but arms.

CREU. Its soldier then; an inmate, not its lord.

ION. Wou'dst thou, through fear of what might happen, kill me? 1344

CREU. Lest death should be my portion, if not thine.

ION. Childless thou enviest that my father found me.

CREU. And wilt thou make a childless house thy spoil?

ION. Devolves my father then no share to me?

CREU. His shield, his spear; be those thine heritage.

ION. Come from the altar, quit that hallow'd seat.

CREU. Instruct thy mother, whosoe'er she be.

ION. Shalt thou unpunish'd meditate my death?

CREU. Within this shrine if thou wilt murder me.

ION. What pleasure 'midst these sacred wreaths to die?

CREU. We shall grieve one, by whom we have been griev'd.

ION. Strange, that the god should give these laws to men,

Bearing no stamp of honour, nor design'd

With provident thought; it is not meet to place

Th' unrighteous at his altars, worthier far

To be chas'd thence; nor decent that the vile

Should with their touch pollute the gods: the good,

Oppress'd with wrongs, should at those hallow'd seats

Seek refuge: ill beseems it that th' unjust

And just alike should seek protection there.

THE PRIESTESS, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

PRIEST. Forbear, my son: leaving th' oracular seat
I pass this pale, the priestess of the god,
The guardian of the tripod's ancient law,
Call'd to this charge from all the Delphian dames.

ION. Hail, my lov'd mother, dear, though not my parent.

PRIEST. Yet let me have the name, 'tis grateful to me.

ION. - Hast thou yet heard their wily trains to kill me?

PRIEST. I have: but void of mercy thou dost wrong.

ION. Should I not ruin those that sought my life?

- PRIEST. Stepdames to former sons are always hostile.
ION. And I to stepdames, ill entreated thus.
PRIEST. Be not, this shrine now leaving for thy country.
ION. How then, by thy monition, should I act?
PRIEST. Go with good omens, pure to Athens go.
ION. All must be pure, that kill their enemies.
PRIEST. So do not thou: attentive mark my words.
ION. Speak: from good will whate'er thou say'st must flow.
PRIEST. Seest thou the vase I hold beneath mine arm?
ION. I see an ancient ark entwined with wreaths.
PRIEST. In this long since an infant I receiv'd thee.
ION. What say'st thou? New is thy discourse, and strange.
PRIEST. In silence have I kept them: now I shew them.
ION. And why conceal'd, as long since thou receiv'dst me?
PRIEST. The god would have thee in his shrine a servant.
ION. Is that no more his will? How should I know it?
PRIEST. Thy father shewn, he sends thee from this land.
ION. Hast thou preserv'd these things by charge, or how?
PRIEST. It was the god that so dispos'd my thought.
ION. With what design? Speak, finish thy discourse.
PRIEST. E'en to this hour to keep what then I found.
ION. What gain imports this to me, or what loss?
PRIEST. There didst thou lie wrapt in thy infant vests.
ION. Thou hast produced whence I may find my mother.
PRIEST. Since now the god so wills, but not before.
ION. This is a day of blest discoveries.
PRIEST. Now take them: o'er all Asia, and the bounds
Of Europe hold thy progress: thou shalt know
These tokens. To do pleasure to the god
I nurtur'd thee, my son; now to thy hand
Restore what was his will I should receive
Unbidden, and preserve: for what intent
It was his will, I have not pow'r to say.
That I had these, or where they were conceal'd,
No mortal knew. And now farewell: the love
I bear thee equals what a parent feels.
Let thy enquiries where they ought begin,
First if some Delphian virgin gave thee birth,

And in this shrine exposed thee: next if one
Of Greece. From me, and from the god, who feels
An interest in thy fortune, thou hast all.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

- ION. Ah me, the moist tear trickles from mine eye,
When I reflect that she, who gave me birth,
By stealth espous'd may, with like secrecy
Have sold me, to my infant lips her breast
Denied: but in the temple of the god
Without a name, a servile life I led.
All from the god was gracious, but from fortune ^{3.4}
Harsh: for the time, when in a mother's arms
I in her fondness should have known some joy
Of life, from that sweet care was I estrang'd,
A mother's nurture: nor less wretched she,
Thus forced to lose the pleasure in her son.
But I will take this vase, and to the god
Bear it, an hallow'd offering; that from thence
I may find nothing which I would not find.
Should she, that gave me being, chance to be
A slave, to find her were a greater ill,
Than to rest silent in this ignorance.
O Phœbus, in thy temple hang I this.—
What am I doing? War I not against
The pleasure of the god, who saved for me
These pledges of my mother? I must dare,
And open these: my fate can not be shunn'd.
Ye sacred garlands, what have you so long
Conceal'd; ye bands, that keep these precious relics?
Behold the cover of this circular vase,
Its freshness knows no change, as if a god
So will'd; this osier-woven ark yet keeps
Its soundness undecay'd; yet many a year,
Since it contain'd this treasur'd charge, has pass'd.
- CREU. What an unhoped-for sight do I behold!
- ION. I thought thou long hadst known to keep thee silent.

1451. This is generally attributed to the Chorus: Mr. Heath assigns it to Ion; with reason, as appears by the answer of Creusa.

- CREU. Silence is mine no more; instruct not me;
For I behold the ark, wherein of old
I laid thee, O my son, an infant babe,
And in the caves of Cecrops, with the rocks
Of Macrai roof'd, expos'd thee: I will quit
This altar, though I run on certain death.
- ION. Seize her; for by the impulse of the god
She leaves the sculptur'd altar: bind her hands.
- CREU. Instantly kill me, so that I embrace
This vase, and thee, and these thy conceal'd pledges.
- ION. Is not this strange? I take thee at thy word.
- CREU. Not strange: a friend thou by thy friends art found.
- ION. Thy friend! Yet wou'dst thou kill me secretly.
- CREU. My son; if that to parents is most dear.
- ION. Forbear thy wiles; I shall refute them well.
- CREU. Might I but come to what I wish, my son!
- ION. Is this vase empty, or contains it aught?
- CREU. Thy infant vests, in which I once exposed thee.
- ION. And wilt thou name them to me, e'er thou see them?
- CREU. If I recount them not be death my meed.
- ION. Speak then: thy confidence hath something strange.
- CREU. A tissue, look, which when a child I wrought.
- ION. What is it? Various are the works of virgins.
- CREU. A slight, unfinish'd essay of the loom.
- ION. What figure wrought? Thou shalt not take me thus.
- CREU. A Gorgon central in the warp inwoven.
- ION. What fortune hunts me, O supreme of Gods!
- CREU. And like an Ægis edged with serpents round.
- ION. Such is the woof, and such the vest I find.
- CREU. Thou old embroidery of my virgin hands!
- ION. Is there aught else besides this happy proof?
- CREU. Two dragons, an old work, their jaws of gold.
- ION. The gift of Pallas, who thus nurtures children?
- CREU. Emblems of Erichthonius of old times.
- ION. Why? for what use? Explain these works of gold.
- CREU. For ornaments to grace the infant's neck.
- ION. See, here they are; the third I wish to know.
- CREU. A branch of olive then I wreath'd around thee,
Pluck'd from that tree which from Minerva's rock

First sprung: if it be there, it still retains
 Its verdure, for the foliage of that olive
 Fresh in immortal beauty never fades.

ION. O my dear mother, I with joy behold thee,
 With transport 'gainst thy cheek my cheek recline.

CREU. My son, my son, far dearer to thy mother
 Than yon bright orb, the god will pardon me,
 Do I then hold thee in my arms, thus found
 Beyond my hopes, when in the realms below,
 I thought thy habitation 'mongst the dead!

ION. O my dear mother, in thy arms I seem
 'As one that had been dead to life return'd.

CREU. Ye wide expanded rays of heavenly light, 1445.
 What notes, what high-raised strains shall tell my joy!
 This pleasure whence, this unexpected transport?

ION. There was no blessing further from my thoughts
 Than this, my mother, to be found thy son.

CREU. I tremble yet.

ION. And hast thou yet a fear,
 Holding me, not to hold me?

CREU. Such fond hopes
 Long time had I renounc'd. Thou hallow'd matron,
 From whom didst thou receive my infant child?
 What blest hand brought him to Apollo's shrine?

ION. It was the god's appointment: may our life
 To come be happy, as the past was wretched.

CREU. Not without tears, my son, wast thou brought forth;
 Nor without anguish did my hands resign thee.
 Now breathing on thy cheek I feel a joy
 Transporting me with heart-felt ecstasies.

ION. The words, expressive of thy joys, speak mine.

CREU. Childless no more, no more alone, my house
 Now shines with festive joy, my realms now own
 A lord; Erectheus blooms again; no more
 His high-traced lineage sees night dark'ning round,
 But glories in the sun's refulgent beams.

ION. Now let my father, since he's present here,
 Be partner of the joy which I have given you.

CREU. What says my son?

ION. Such, such as I am prov'd.

CREU. What mean thy words? Far other is thy birth.

ION. Ah me, thy virgin bed produced me base.

CREU. Nor bridal torch, my son, nor bridal dance
Had graced my nuptial rites, when thou wast born.

ION. Then I'm a wretch, a base-born wretch: say whence.

CREU. Be witness thou, by whom the Gorgon died,

ION. What means this adjuration?

CREU. Who hast fix'd

High o'er my cave thy scat amidst the rocks
With olive cloth'd.

ION. Abstruse thy words, and dark.

CREU. Where on the cliffs the nightingale attunes
Her songs, Apollo——

ION. Why Apollo named?

CREU. Led me in secret to his bed.

ION. Speak on;

Thy words import some glorious fortune to me.

CREU. Thee in the tenth revolving month, my son,
A secret pang to Phœbus did I bear.

ION. Thy words, if true, are grateful to my soul.

CREU. These swathing bands, thy mother's virgin work,
Wove by my flying shuttle, round thy body
I roll'd; but from thy lips my breast withheld,
A mother's nouriture, nor bath'd thy hands
In cleansing lavers; but to death expos'd thee,
Laid in the dreary cave, to birds of prey
A feast, rent piecemeal by their ravenous beaks.

ION. Cruel, my mother, was thy deed.

CREU. By fear

Constrain'd, my son, I cast thy life away;
Unwillingly I left thee there to die.

ION. And from my hands unholy were thy death.

CREU. Dreadful was then my fortune, dreadful here,
Whirl'd by the eddy blast from misery there
To misery here, and back again to joy:
Her boisterous winds are chang'd; may she remain

In this repose; enough of ills are past,
After the storm soft breathes a favouring gale.

CHOR. From this example 'midst the greatest ills
Never let mortal man abandon hope.

ION. O thou, that hast to thousands wrought a change
Of state e'er this, involving them in ills,
And raising them to happiness again,
Fortune, to what a point have I been carried,
Ready to kill my mother, horrid thought!
But in the sun's bright course each day affords
Instruction. Thee, my mother, have I found,
In that discovery blest; nor hath my birth
Aught I can blame: yet one thing would I say
To thee alone: walk this way: to thine ear
In secret would I whisper this, and throw
The veil of darkness o'er each circumstance.
Take heed my mother, lest thy maiden fault
Seeks in these secret nuptials to conceal
Its fault, then charges on the god the deed;
And fearing my reproach, to Phœbus gives
A son, to Phœbus whom thou didst not bear.

CREU. By her, who 'gainst the giants in her car
Fought by the side of Jove, victorious Pallas,
No one of mortal race is father to thee,
But he, who brought thee up, the royal Phœbus.

ION. Why give his son then to another father,
Why say that I was born the son of Xuthus?

CREU. Not born the son of Xuthus, but he gives thee
Born from himself, as friend to friend may give
His son, an heir adopted to his house.

ION. True is the god, his tripod else were vain:
Not without cause then is my mind perplex'd.

CREU. Hear what my thoughts suggest: to work thee good
Apollo plac'd thee in a noble house.
Acknowledg'd his, the rich inheritance
Could not be thine, nor could a father's name:
For I conceal'd my nuptials, and had plann'd
To kill thee secretly: for this the god

In kindness gives thee to another father.

ION. My mind is prompt to entertain such thoughts;
But, entering, at his shrine will I enquire
If from a mortal father I am sprung,
Or from Apollo.—Ha! what may this be!
What god above the hallow'd dome unveils
His radiant face that shines another sun?
Haste, let us fly: the presence of the gods
'Tis not for mortals to behold, and live.

MIN. Fly not; in me no enemy you fly;
At Athens friendly to you, and no less
Here. From that land I come, so named from me,
By Phœbus sent with speed: unmeet he deems it
To shew himself before you, lest with blame
The past be mention'd; this he gave in charge,
To tell thee that she bore thee, and to him,
Phœbus thy father: he, to whom he gave thee,
Not as to th' author of thy being gives thee,
But to th' inheritance of a noble house.
This declaration made, lest thou shou'dst die
Kill'd by thy mother's wily trains, or she
By thee, these means to save you he devis'd.
These things in silence long conceal'd, at Athens
The royal Phœbus would have made it known
That thou art sprung from her, thy father he.
But to discharge my office, and unfold
The oracle of the god, for which you yoked
Your chariots, hear: Creusa, take thy son,
Go to the land of Cecrops, let him mount
The royal throne, for from Erectheus sprung
That honour is his due, the sovereignty
Over my country; through the states of Greece
Wide his renown shall spread; for from his root
Four sons shall spring, that to the land, the tribes,
The dwellers on my rock, shall give their names.
Geleon the first, Hopletes, Argades,
And from my Ægis named Ægicoris:
Their sons in fate's appointed time shall fix

Their seats along the coast, or in the isles
 Girt by th' Ægean sea, and to my land
 Give strength; extending thence the opposite plains
 Of either continent shall make their own,
 Europe and Asia, and shall boast their name
 Ionians, from the honour'd Ion called.
 To thee by Xuthus shall a son be born,
 Dorus, from whom the Dorian state shall rise
 To high renown; in the Pelopian land
 Another near the Rhian cliffs, along
 The sea-wash'd coast, his potent monarchy
 Shall stretch, Achæus; and his subject realms
 Shall glory in their chief's illustrious name.
 Well hath Apollo quitted him in all;
 First without pain he caus'd thee bear a son.
 That from thy friends thou might'st conceal his birth:
 After the birth, soon as his infant limbs
 Thy hands had cloth'd, to Mercury he gave
 The charge to take the babe, and in his arms
 Convey him hither; here with tenderness
 He nurtur'd him, nor suffer'd him to perish.
 Guard now the secret that he is thy son,
 That his opinion Xuthus may enjoy
 Delighted: thou too hast thy blessings, lady.
 And now farewell: from this relief from ills
 A prosperous fortune I to both announce.

ION. O Pallas, daughter of all-powerful Jove,
 Not with distrust shall we receive thy words:
 I am convinc'd that Phœbus is my father,
 My mother she, not unassur'd before.

CREU. Hear me too now: Phœbus I praise, before
 Unprais'd; my son he now restores, of whom
 Till now I deem'd him heedless. Now these gates
 Are beauteous to mine eyes, his oracles
 Now grateful to my soul, unpleasant late.
 With rapture on these sounding rings my hands
 Now hang, with rapture I address the gates.

MIN. This I approve, thy former wayward thoughts

Resign'd, with honour that thou name the god.
Slow are the gifts of heav'n, but found at length
Not void of pow'r.

CREU. My son, let us now go
To Athens.

MIN. Go, myself will follow you.

CREU. A noble guard, and friendly to the state.

MIN. But seat him high on thy paternal throne.

CREU. A rich possession, and I glory in him.

CHOR. Son of Latona and all powerful Jove,
Apollo, hail! Though fortune's blackest storms
Rage on his house, the man, whose pious soul
Reveres the gods, assumes a confidence,
And justly; for the good at length obtain
The meed of virtue: but th' unholy wretch,
Such is his nature, never can be happy.

A L C E S T I S.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

APOLLO

ORCUS

ALCESTIS

ADMETUS

EUMELUS

HERCULES

PHERES

ATTENDANTS

CHORUS OF PHERÆANS.

ALCESTIS.

ADMETUS and **Alcestis** were nearly related before their marriage. **Æolus**, the third in descent from **Prometheus**, was the father of **Cretheus** and **Salmones**; **Æson** the father of **Jason**, and **Pheres** the father of **Admetus**, were sons of **Cretheus**: **Tyro**, the daughter of **Salmones**, was by **Neptune** mother to **Pelias**, whose eldest daughter **Alcestis** was. The historian, who relates the arts by which **Medea** induced the daughters of **Pelias** to cut their father in pieces in expectation of seeing him restored to youth, tells us that **Alcestis** alone, through the tenderness of her filial piety, concurred not with her sisters in that fatal deed. *Diodor. Sic.*

Pheres, now grown old, had resigned his kingdom to his son, and retired to his paternal estate, as was usual in those states where the sceptre was a spear. **Admetus**, on his first accession to the regal power, had kindly received **Apollo**, who was banished from heaven, and compelled for the space of a year to be a slave to a mortal; and the god, after he was restored to his celestial honours, did not forget that friendly house; but, when **Admetus** lay ill of a disease from which there was no recovery, prevailed upon the Fates to spare his life, on condition that some near relation would consent to die for him; but neither his father, nor his mother, nor any of his friends, was willing to pay this ransom. **Alcestis**, hearing this, generously devoted her own life to save her husband's.

Upon this wild and unpromising fable the Poet has built this pleasing drama. With a beautiful simplicity which characterises the compositions of the ancients, and with a tenderness of which his own heart was peculiarly susceptible, he has given these scenes of domestic sensibility and distress their full effect. The interview indeed between Pheres and Admetus is harsh and indelicate; the Chorus acknowledges it to be so, and rebukes them both; but it is the natural result of the manners and ideas of the times, and therefore not offensive to an Athenian audience, though to us it must appear indecent: it shews, what it was intended to shew, the impassioned grief of Admetus, and in those times the passions spoke their own natural language without reserve; and according to the ideas of those times Pheres must be considered as guilty of the basest and most unnatural pusillanimity. Virgil, the most accurate observer of nature, gives even the unfeeling and savage Mezentius the softening of parental affection, and makes him exclaim, on the sight of his son, who died to save his father,

Tantane me tenuit vivendi, nate, voluptas,
Ut pro me hostili paterer succedere dextræ
Quem genui? tuane hæc genitor per vulnera servor,
Morte tuâ vivens?

The design of this tragedy is to recommend the virtue of hospitality, so sacred among the Grecians, and encouraged on political views, as well as to keep alive a generous and social benevolence: the refinement of a double moral ill agrees with the simplicity of the ancients.

The scene is in the vestibule of the house of Admetus.

Palæphatus has given this explanation of the fable. After the death of Pelias, Acastus pursued the unhappy daughters to punish them for destroying their father. Alcestis fled to Pheræ; Acastus demanded her of Admetus, who refused to give her up; he therefore advanced towards Pheræ with a great army, laying the country waste with fire and sword. Admetus marched out of the city to check these devastations, fell into an ambush, and was taken prisoner. Acastus threatened to put him to death. When Alcestis understood that the life of Admetus was in this danger on her account, she went voluntarily and surrendered herself to Acastus, who discharged Admetus, and detained her in custody. At this critical time Hercules, on his expedition to Thrace, arrives at Pheræ, is hospitably entertained by Admetus, and, being informed of the distress and danger of Alcestis, immediately attacks Acastus, defeats his army, recovers the lady, and restores her to Admetus.

ALCESTIS.

APOLLO.

THY royal house, Admetus, yet again
I visit, where a slave among thy slaves
Thy table, though a god, I deign'd to praise;
To this compell'd by Jove, who slew my son
The healing sage, launching against his breast
The flaming thunder; hence enraged I kill'd
The Cyclops, that prepared his fiery bolts.
For this a penal task my vengeful sire
Assign'd me, to a mortal doom'd a slave
Perforce; I hither came, and fed his herds,
Who friendly entertain'd me, guarding then,
And to this day, his hospitable house.
Holy the house, and holy is its lord,
The son of Pheres; him from death I saved
The Fates beguiling; for those ancient pow'rs
Assented that Admetus should escape
Death then approaching, would some other go,
Exchang'd for him, to the dark realms beneath.
His friends, his father, e'en the aged dame
That gave him birth, were ask'd in vain; not one
Was found, his wife except; for him she will'd
To die, and view no more th' ethereal light.
She in the house, supported in their arms,
Now sighs out her last breath: for she must die,
And this the fate-appointed day: for this,
Dear as it is, I leave the friendly mansion,
Lest there pollution find me. But I see
Orcus advancing near, priest of the dead,

He to the house of Pluto will conduct her :
 Observant of the stated time he comes,
 True to the day, when she perforce must die.

ORCUS, APOLLO.

ORC. Why art thou here? Why dost thou make this house
 Thy haunt, Apollo? Thou dost wrong, again
 Th' infernal realms defrauding of their honours,
 Torn from them, or delay'd. Sufficed it not
 T' have snatch'd Admetus from his doom, the Fates
 With fraudulent arts deluding? Now again
 Arm'd with thy bow why dost thou guard his wife,
 Daughter of Pelias, bound by solemn vow,
 Saving her husband's life, to die for him?

APOL. Fear not; thy right I reverence and just claim.

ORC. What means thy bow, if thou revere the right?

APOL. It ever is my wont to bear these arms.

ORC. Aye, and unjustly to defend this house.

APOL. I mourn th' afflictions of the man I love.

ORC. Wou'dst thou defraud me of this second dead?

APOL. The first by violence I took not from thee.

ORC. How on the earth then walks he now alive?

APOL. Ransom'd by her, for whom thou now art come.

ORC. And I will lead her to the realms below.

APOL. Take her: I know not if I might persuade thee.

ORC. Him, whom I ought, to seize; for that prepared.

APOL. No: but t' involve in death ripe, ling'ring age.

ORC. Full well I understand thy speech and zeal.

APOL. May then Alcestis to that age be spared?

ORC. No: honour, be assured, delights e'en me.

APOL. Thou canst but take a single life, no more,

ORC. Greater my glory when the youthful die.

APOL. More sumptuous obsequies await her age.

ORC. This were a law in favour of the rich.

APOL. What secret meaning hath thy wisdom here?

59. It was customary to bury persons, who died advanced in years, with greater pomp and magnificence than those who died young. Barnes.

- ORC. They with their wealth would purchase to die old.
 APOL. Wilt thou not then indulge me with this grace?
 ORC. Not I indeed: go to: thou know'st my manners.
 APOL. Hostile to mortals, hateful to the gods.
 ORC. Thou canst not have all that thou shou'dst not have.
 APOL. Yet, ruthless as thou art, soon wilt thou cease
 This contest; such a man to Pheres' house
 Comes, to the frozen continent of Thrace
 Sent by Eurystheus for the savage steeds
 Yoked to the tyrant's car. He, in this house
 A welcome guest t' Admetus, will by force
 Take his wife from thee; and no thanks from me
 Will be thy due; yet what I now entreat
 Then thou wilt yield, and I shall hate thee still.
 ORC. Say what thou wilt, nothing the more for that
 Shalt thou from me obtain: this woman goes,
 Be sure of that, to Pluto's dark domain.
 I go, and with this sword assert my claim,
 For sacred to th' infernal gods that head,
 Whose hair is hallow'd by this charmed blade.

CHORUS.

- 1st SEM. Before this royal mansion all is still:
 What may this melancholy silence mean?
 2d SEM. And not a friend is nigh, from whom to learn
 Whether we ought to wail the queen now dead,
 Or lives she yet, yet sees the light of heav'n,
 For conjugal affection justly deem'd
 By me, by all, the noblest of her sex.
 1st SEM. Hear you a cry, hear you a clash of hands

81. The learned Rnæus, in his note on *Æneid* iv. 698, gives the best account we have of this opinion of the ancients, that the hair of the dying person was sacred to Proserpine; and that a lock of it must be cut off as an offering to the infernal queen before the soul could be released from the body; that probably it was derived from the sacrifices, in which it was usual to cut some hairs from the forehead of the victim, and to throw them into the flames. See *Æneid* vi. 245. So the dying person was considered as a victim to the infernal powers.

89, &c. The usual indications of mourning at the house upon the decease of a person are here enumerated; the beating of hands and lamentation of the family

Within, or lamentations for the dead?

2d SEM. Not e'en a servant holds his station here
Before the gates. O, 'midst this awful gloom
Appear, bright Pæan, and dispel the storm!

1st SEM. If she were dead, they would not be thus silent;
Nor could the body vanish from the house.

2d SEM. Whence is thy confidence? My fears o'ercome me.

1st SEM. A wife so honour'd would Admetus bear
Without due pomp in silence to her tomb?

2d SEM. Nor vase of fountain water do I see
Before the doors, as custom claims, to bathe
The corse; and none hath on the portal placed
His locks, in solemn mourning for the dead
Usually shorn; nor does the younger train
Of females raise their sorrowing voices high.

1st SEM. Yet this the fatal day, when she must leave
The light of heav'n.

2d SEM. Why dost thou mention this?
O, thou hast touch'd my heart, hast touch'd my soul.

1st SEM. When on the good afflictions fall, to grieve
Becomes the man that hath been priz'd as honest.

STRO. In vain, our pious vows are vain:
Make we the flying sail our care,
The light bark bounding o'er the main,
To what new realm shall we repair?
To Lycia's hallow'd strand?

Or where in solitary state,
'Midst thirsty deserts wild and wide
That close him round on ev'ry side,
Prophetic Ammon holds his awful seat?

What charm, what potent hand
Shall save her from the realms beneath?
He comes, the ruthless tyrant Death:

within, the laver of ablution in the vestibule, the locks hung up there, and the mournful music of the younger women, the præfææ, at the doors. For the custom of cutting off the hair on these occasions, see the first note on the *Choephora* of *Æschylus*.

I have no priest, no altar more,
 Whose aid I may implore.
 ANTIS. O that the son of Phœbus now
 Lived to behold th' ethereal light !
 Then might she leave the seats below,
 Where Pluto reigns in cheerless night :
 The Sage's potent art,
 'Till thund'ring Jove's avenging pow'r
 Hurl'd his red thunders at his breast,
 Could from the yawning gulf releast
 To the sweet light of life the dead restore.
 Who now shall aid impart ?
 To ev'ry god at ev'ry shrine
 The king hath paid the rites divine :
 But vain his vows, his pious care ;
 And ours is dark despair.

CHORUS, FEMALE ATTENDANT.

CHOR. But of the female train one from the house
 Comes bath'd in tears: what tidings shall I hear ?
 To weep, if aught of ill befalls thy lords,
 Becomes thee : I would know if yet she lives,
 Or sinks beneath the ruthless pow'r of death.
 ATT. As living I may speak of her, and dead.
 CHOR. Living and dead at once, how may that be ?
 ATT. E'en now she sinks in death, and breathes her last.
 CHOR. Unhappy king, of what a wife bereft !
 ATT. Nor knows our lord his suffering, e'er it comes.
 CHOR. Is there no hope then yet to save her life ?
 ATT. Th' inevitable day of fate is come.
 CHOR. Have you prepared what the sad case requires ?
 ATT. Each honour that may grace her obsequies.
 CHOR. Illustrious in her death, the best of wives:

162. Dean Swift, in one of his things to Dr. Sheridan, having given his judgment of the old comedians, proceeds to give it also on the old tragedians; and of Euripides speaks thus :

Proceed to tragics. First, Euripides
 (An author where I sometimes dip a-days)

The sun in his wide course sees not her equal.

ATT. The best of wives indeed: who will gainsay it?
 What could the brightest pattern of her sex
 Do more? What greater proof give of the honour
 She bears her husband, than a ready will
 To die for him! This all the city knows.
 How in the house she hath demean'd herself
 Will claim thy admiration. When she knew
 The destin'd day was come, in fountain water
 She bath'd her lily-tinctur'd limbs, then took
 From her rich chests of odorous cedar form'd
 A splendid robe, and her most radiant dress:
 Thus gorgeously array'd she stood before
 The hallow'd flames, and thus address'd her pray'r;
 O queen, I go to the infernal shades,
 Yet, e'er I go, with reverence let me breathe
 My last request, Protect my orphan children,
 Make my son happy with the wife he loves,
 And wed my daughter to a noble husband:
 Nor let them, like their mother, to the tomb
 Untimely sink, but in their native land
 Be blest through lengthen'd life to honour'd age.
 Then to each altar in the royal house

Is rightly censur'd by the Stagirite,
 Who says his numbers do not fadge aright.
 A friend of mine that author despises
 So much, he swears the very best piece is, }
 For aught he knows, as bad as Thespis's;
 And that a woman in those tragedies,
 Commonly speaking, but a sad jade is, &c.

This our fathers applauded as wit, *nimum patienter, ne dicam stulte mirati*. The misrepresentation of Aristotle, the false judgment on our poet, and the undeserved reflection on his female characters, give us reason to suppose that the Dean dipped but lightly into such authors as these; he might dip deeper into Plautus and Aristophanes; but he plunged deepest into the ribaldry of Lucian and Rabelais.

161. This bathing was intended as preparatory to her funeral, a ceremony always observed by the ancients.

164. This also was in order to her funeral, a sepulchral robe, *φᾶρος ταφῆιον*, as Homer calls it, *Odys. ii. 199*.

She went, and crown'd it, and address'd her vows,
 Plucking the myrtle bough: nor tear, nor sigh
 Came from her, neither did th' approaching ill
 Change the fresh beauties of her vermeil cheek.
 Her chamber then she visits, and her bed;
 There her tears flow'd, and thus she spoke, O bed,
 To which my wedded lord, for whom I die,
 Led me a virgin bride, farewell: to thee
 No blame do I impute, for me alone
 Hast thou destroy'd: disdaining to betray
 Thee, and my lord, I die: to thee shall come
 Some other woman, not more chaste, perchance
 More happy: as she lay, she kiss'd the couch,
 And bath'd it with a flood of tears: that pass'd,
 She left her chamber, then return'd, and oft
 She left it, oft return'd, and on the couch
 Fondly, each time she enter'd, cast herself.
 Her children, as they hung upon her robes
 Weeping, she rais'd, and clasp'd them to her breast
 Each after each, as now about to die.
 Each servant through the house burst into tears
 In pity of their mistress; she to each
 Stretch'd her right hand; nor was there one so mean
 To whom she spoke not, and admitted him
 To speak to her again. Within the house
 These are our griefs. Admetus must have died,
 Have perish'd; but escaping is immers'd
 In sorrows, which his heart shall ne'er forget.

CHOR. Well may the groan burst from him, thus to lose
 A wife with every excellence adorn'd.

ATT. He weeps indeed, and in his arms supports
 His much-lov'd wife, entreats her not to leave him,
 Asking impossibilities: She wastes
 And fades with her disease; her languid limbs
 Supporting on his hand, yet while some breath

Of life remains, she wishes to behold
The radiance of the sun, 'tis her last view,
As never more to see his golden orb.
I go to tell them thou art here: not all
Bear to their lords that firm unshaken faith,
T' attend them in their ills; but thou of old
Hast to this house approved thyself a friend.

CHOR. Supreme of gods, is there no remedy
To these afflictions; from the storms of fate
No refuge to our lords? Some means of safety
Hast thou assign'd? Or must these locks be shorn,
And sorrow robe me in her sable weeds?

ATT. Too plain, my friends, too plain: yet to the gods
Breathe we our vows, for great their pow'r to save.
O royal Pæan, for Admetus' ills
Find some relief; assist him, O assist him;
As thou before didst save him, save him now
From death, repress the tyrant's murd'rous haste!

CHOR. Alas, alas! Woe, woe is me! Thou son
Of Pheres, wilt thou bear to live, deprived
Of such a wife? Will not Despair unsheath
The self-destroying sword? Will it not find
Some means of violent death? This day thy wife,
Dear should I say? nay dearest to thy soul,
Shalt thou see dead.—But she comes forth, and with her
Her husband. Groan, thou land of Pheres, raise
The cry of mourning; for the best of women
Wastes with disease, and drooping to the earth
Sinks to th' infernal Pluto's dreary realms.
Never will I pronounce the nuptial state
To pleasure more allied than grief: of old
This often have I noted, chiefly now
Viewing my king's affliction, who, bereft
Of this sweet excellence, is doom'd to pass
A solitary life estranged from joy.

ALCESTIS, ADMETUS, EUMELUS, CHORUS.

ALC. Thou sun, and thou fair light of day, ye clouds

That in quick eddies whirl along the sky !

ADM. Sees thee and me most wretched, yet in nought
Offending 'gainst the gods that thou shou'dst die.

ALC. O earth, ye tow'ring roofs, thou bridal bed
Rais'd in Iolcos, my paternal seat !

ADM. O thou poor sufferer, raise thee, leave me not ;
Entreat the pow'rful gods to pity thee.

ALC. I see the two-oar'd boat, the Stygian barge ;
And he, that wafts the dead, grasps in his hand
His pole, and calls me, Why dost thou delay ?
Haste thee ; thou lingerest ; all is ready here.
Charon impatient speeds me to be gone.

ADM. A melancholy voyage this to me.
O thou unhappy, what a fate is ours !

ALC. He drags me, some one drags me to the gates
That close upon the dead ; dost thou not see him,
How stern he frowns beneath his gloomy brows,
Th' impetuous Pluto ? What wou'dst thou with me ?
Off, let me go. Ah, what a dreary path,
Wretched, most wretched, must I downwards tread !

ADM. To thy friends mournful, most to me, and these
Thy children, who with me this sorrow share.

ALC. No longer hold me up, hold me no longer ;
Here lay me down : I have not strength to stand :
Death is hard by : dark night creeps o'er my eyes.
My children, O my children, now no more,
Your mother is no more : farewell ; may you
More happy see the golden light of heav'n !

ADM. Ah, what a mournful word is this ! to me
Than any death more painful : by the gods,
Forsake me not ; shou'dst thou be taken from me,
I were no more ; in thee I live ; thy love,
Thy sweet society my soul reveres.

ALC. Thou seest, Admetus, what to me the Fates
Assign ; yet, e'er I die, I wish to tell thee
What lies most near my heart. I honour'd thee,
And in exchange for thine my forfeit life
Devoted ; now I die for thee, though free .

Not to have died, but from Thessalia's chiefs
 Preferring whom I pleas'd in royal state
 To have lived happy here: I had no will
 To live bereft of thee with these poor orphans:
 I die without reluctance, though the gifts
 Of youth are mine to make life grateful to me.
 Yet he that gave thee birth, and she that bore thee,
 Deserted thee, though well it had besem'd them
 With honour to have died for thee, t' have saved
 Their son with honour, glorious in their death.
 They had no child but thee, they had no hope
 Of other offspring, shou'dst thou die; and I
 Might thus have lived, thou might'st have lived till age
 Crept slowly on, nor wou'dst thou heave the sigh
 Thus of thy wife deprived, nor train alone
 Thy orphan children: but some god appointed
 It should be thus: thus be it: thou to me
 Requite this kindness; never shall I ask
 An equal retribution, nothing bears
 A value high as life: yet my request
 Is just, thou wilt confess it; for thy love
 To these our children equals mine, thy soul
 If wisdom tempers: in their mother's house
 Let them be lords: wed not again, to set
 A stepdame o'er my children, some base woman
 That wants my virtues; she through jealousy
 Will work against their lives, because to thee
 I bore them: do not this, I beg thee do not;
 For to the offspring of a former bed
 A stepdame comes sharp as a serpent's tooth.
 My son, that holds endearing converse with thee,
 Hath in his father a secure protection.
 But who, my daughter, shall with honour guide
 Thy virgin years? What woman shalt thou find

290. *Juventutis flore adhuc vigens. Analogiam scilicet quam aurora ad diem, juvenus habet ad hominis ætatem. Heath.* For $\frac{7}{8}$; Dr. Musgrave hath admitted $\frac{7}{8}$ es into the text.

New-wedded to thy father, whose vile arts
Will not with slanderous falsehoods taint thy name,
And blast thy nuptials in youth's freshest bloom?
For never shall thy mother see thee led
A bride, nor at thy throes speak comfort to thee,
Then present when a mother's tenderness
Is most alive: for I must die; the ill
Waits not a day, but quickly shall I be
Number'd among'st the dead. Farewell, be happy.
And thou, my husband, may'st with honour boast
Thou hast been wedded to a virtuous wife;
And you, my children, glory in your mother.

CHOR. Fear not: I boldly pledge my faith that this
He will perform, if reason holds her seat.

ADM. This shall be done, let not such fears disturb thee,
It shall be done; for living thou wast mine,
And dead thou only shalt be call'd my wife.
Never in thy dear place Thessalian bride
Shall call me husband: no: nor other woman,
Though from a line of ancient kings she draws
Her noble blood, and boasts each peerless grace
Of native beauty. I am blest with children,
Nor wish I more; in these I pray the gods
I may have joy, since all my joy in thee
Is lost. This mourning not one single year,
But to my life's last period, shall be borne.
How hateful are my parents! for their words
Alone were friendly, not their deeds; whilst thou,
Paying the dearest forfeit for my life,
Hast saved me: Shall I ever cease to mourn,
Deprived of such a wife? Hence I renounce
The feast, the cheerful guest, the flow'ry wreath,
And song that used to echo through my house:
For never will I touch the lyre again,
Nor to the Libyan flute's sweet measures raise
My voice: with thee all my delights are dead.
Thy beauteous figure, by the artist's hand
Skilfully wrought, shall in my bed be laid;

By that reclining, I will clasp it to me,
 And call it by thy name, and think I hold
 My dear wife in my arms, and have her yet,
 Though now no more I have her: cold delight
 I ween; yet thus th' affliction of my soul
 Shall I relieve, and visiting my dreams
 Shalt thou delight me; for to see a friend
 Is grateful to the soul, come when he will,
 Though an unreal vision of the night.
 Had I the voice of Orpheus, and his skill
 Of pow'r to soothe with my melodious strains
 The daughter of bright Ceres, or her husband,
 That from their realms I might receive thee back,
 I would go down; nor should th' infernal dog,
 Nor the stern Charon, sitting at his oar
 To waft the dead, restrain me, till thy life
 I had restored to the fair light of day.
 But there await me till I die; prepare
 A mansion for me, as again with me
 To dwell; for in thy tomb will I be laid
 In the same cedar, by thy side compos'd;
 For e'en in death I will not be disjoin'd
 From thee, who hast alone been faithful to me.

CHOR. For her dear sake thy sorrows will I share
 As friend with friend; and she is worthy of it.

ALC. You hear, my children, what your father's words
 Have promised, not to wed another woman
 To your discomfort, nor dishonour me.

ADM. I now repeat it: firm shall be my faith.

ALC. On this, receive thy children from my hands.

ADM. A much-loved gift, and from a much-loved hand.

ALC. Be now, instead of me, a mother to them.

ADM. If they lose thee, it must indeed be so.

ALC. When I should live, I sink among the dead.

ADM. Ah me, what shall I do bereft of thee!

ALC. Time will abate thy grief: the dead is nothing.

ADM. O lead me, by the gods, lead me down with thee.

ALC. Enough, it is enough that I die for thee.

ADM. O fate, of what a wife dost thou deprive me?

ALC. An heavy weight hangs on my darken'd eye.

ADM. If thou forsake me, I am lost indeed.

ALC. As one that is no more I now am nothing.

ADM. Ah, raise thy face: do not forsake thy children.

ALC. It must be so perforce: farewell my children.

ADM. Look on them, but a look.

ALC. I am no more.

ADM. How dost thou? Wilt thou leave us then?

ALC. Farewell.

ADM. And what a wretch, what a lost wretch am I!

CHOR. She's gone; thy wife, Admetus, is no more.

EUM. O my unhappy fate!

My mother sinks to the dark realms of night,

Nor longer views this golden light;

But to the ills of life expos'd

Leaves my poor orphan state.

Her eyes, my father, see, her eyes are clos'd,

And her hand nerveless falls.

Yet hear me, O my mother, hear my cries,

It is thy son that calls,

Who prostrate on the earth breathes on thy lips his sighs.

ADM. — On one that hears not, sees not: I and you
Must bend beneath affliction's heaviest load.

EUM. Ah, she hath left my youth:

My mother, my dear mother, is no more,

Left me my sufferings to deplore;

Who shall my sorrows soothe?

Thou too, my sister, thy full share shalt know

Of grief, thy heart to rend.

Vain, O my father, vain thy nuptial vows,

Brought to this speedy end;

For, when my mother died, in ruin sunk thy house.

CHOR. Admetus, thou perforce must bear these ills:

Thou'rt not the first, nor shalt thou be the last

Of mortal men, to lose a virtuous wife:

For know, death is a debt we all must pay.

ADM. I know it well: not unawares this ill

Falls on me ; I foresaw, and mourn'd it long.
 But I will bear the body hence ; attend ;
 And, whilst you wait, raise with alternate voice
 The Pæan to the ruthless god that rules
 Below : and through my realms of Thessaly
 I give command that all in solemn grief
 For this dear woman shear their locks, and wear
 The sable garb of mourning ; from your steeds,
 Whether in pairs they whirl the car, or bear
 Single the rider's rein, their waving manes
 Cut close ; nor through the city be the sound
 Of flute or lyre for twelve revolving moons.
 Never shall I entomb one dearer to me,
 Or one more kind : these honours from my hands
 She merits, for she only died for me.

STRO. 1. Immortal bliss be thine,
 Daughter of Pelias, in the realms below,
 Immortal pleasures round thee flow,
 Though never there the sun's bright beams shall shine.
 Be the black-brow'd Pluto told,
 And the Stygian boatman old,
 Whose rude hands grasp the oar, the rudder guide,
 The dead conveying o'er the tide,
 Let him be told, so rich a freight before
 His light skiff never bore ;
 Tell him that o'er the joyless lakes
 The noblest of her sex her dreary passage takes.

STRO. 2. Thy praise the Bards shall tell,
 When to their hymning voice the echo rings.
 Or when they sweep the solemn strings,
 And wake to rapture the sev'n-chorded shell,
 Or in Sparta's jocund bow'rs,
 Circling when the vernal hours
 Bring the Carnean feast, whilst through the night

439. For this custom of cutting off the manes of the horses in solemn mournings, Barnes produces instances of the Persians from Herodotus, and of the Grecians from Plutarch.

464. A festival instituted to Carnean Apollo, and celebrated in the month of

Full-orb'd the high moon rolls her light;
 Or where rich Athens proudly elevate
 Shews her magnific state:
 Their voice thy glorious death shall raise,
 And swell th' enraptur'd strain to celebrate thy praise.

ANTIS. 1. O that I had the pow'r,
 Could I but bring thee from the shades of night
 Again to view this golden light,
 To leave that boat, to leave that dreary shore,
 Where Cocytus deep and wide
 Rolls along his sullen tide!
 For thou, O best of women, thou alone
 For thy lord's life daredst give thy own.
 Light lie the earth upon that gentle breast,
 And be thou ever blest!
 But should he choose to wed again,
 Mine, and thy children's hearts would hold him in disdain.

ANTIS. 2. When, to avert his doom,
 His mother in the earth refused to lie;
 Nor would his ancient father die
 To save his son from an untimely tomb;
 Though the hand of time had spread
 Hoar hairs o'er each aged head;
 In youth's fresh bloom, in beauty's radiant glow,
 The darksome way thou daredst to go,
 And for thy youthful lord's to give thy life.
 Be mine so true a wife;
 Though rare the lot: then should I prove
 Th' indissoluble bond of faithfulness and love.

HERCULES, CHORUS.

HERC. Ye strangers, citizens of Pheræ, say
 If I shall find Admetus in the house.
 CHOR. There is the son of Pheres, Hercules.

April by most of the cities of Greece, but particularly Sparta. At this festival the musical numbers, called *Καρνεῖος νόμοι*, were sung by musicians, who contended for victory. Potter's *Archæol. Græc.*

But what occasion tell us, brought thee hither
To Thessaly; to Pheræ why this visit?

HERC. A toil imposed by the Tirynthian king.

CHOR. And whither roving? On what journey bound?

HERC. For the four steeds that whirl the Thracian's car.

CHOR. How to be won? art thou a stranger there?

HERC. A stranger, never on Bistonian ground.

CHOR. These horses are not won without strong contest.

HERC. The toil, whate'er it be, I could not shun.

CHOR. He must be slain, or death awaits thee there.

HERC. Not the first contest this I have essay'd.

CHOR. Shou'dst thou o'ercome their lord, what is the prize?

HERC. His coursers to Eurystheus I shall lead.

CHOR. No slight task in their mouths to place the curb.

HERC. I shall, though from their nostrils they breathe fire.

CHOR. With their fierce jaws they rend the flesh of men.

HERC. So feeds the mountain savage, not the horse.

CHOR. Their mangers shalt thou see all stain'd with blood.

HERC. From whom does he that bred them draw his race?

CHOR. From Mars this king of golden-shielded Thrace.

HERC. How is this toil assign'd me by my fate,

In enterprise so hazardous and high

Engaged, that always with the sons of Mars

I must join battle? with Lycaon first,

With Cygnus next; now with these furious steeds

And their proud lord another contest waits me:

But never shall Alcmena's son be seen

To tremble at the fierceness of a foe.

CHOR. But, see, the sceptred ruler of this land,

Admetus, from his house advances to thee,

521. In the *Hercules Furens*, v. 391. this Cygnus is styled *ξυνοδαίνκτας*, on account of his cruelty to strangers. He resided in Thessaly near the sea coast, and used to oblige every person who travelled that way, or whom ill fortune brought on shore, to contend with him: and his ambition was to be able with the skulls of the victims, which he slew, to build a temple to Apollo. See the Scholiast on Pindar's *Olymp. Ode x.*—Bryant's *Analysis*, v. ii. p. 48. For the combat, see *Hesiod's Shield of Hercules.*—Of this Lycaon we have no account in history.

ADMETUS, HERCULES, CHORUS.

ADM. Hail, son of Jove, of Perseus' noble blood.

HERC. Hail thou, Admetus, king of Thessaly.

ADM. I am no stranger to thy friendly wishes.

HERC. Why are thy locks in sign of mourning shorn?

ADM. 'Tis for one dead, whom I must this day bury.

HERC. The god avert thy mourning for a child!

ADM. My children, what I had, live in my house.

HERC. Thy aged father, haply he is gone.

ADM. My father lives, and she that bore me lives.

HERC. Lies then thy wife Alcestis 'mongst the dead?

ADM. Of her I have in double wise to speak.

HERC. As of the living speak'st thou, or the dead?

ADM. She is, and is no more: this grief afflicts me.

HERC. This gives no information: dark thy words.

ADM. Know'st thou not then the destiny assign'd her?

HERC. I know that she submits to die for thee.

ADM. To this assenting is she not no more?

HERC. Lament her not too soon; await the time.

ADM. She's dead; one soon to die is now no more.

HERC. It differs wide to be, or not to be.

ADM. Such are thy sentiments, far other mine.

HERC. But wherefore are thy tears? What friend is dead?

ADM. A woman; of a woman made I mention.

HERC. Of foreign birth, or one allied to thee?

ADM. Of foreign birth, but to my house most dear.

HERC. How in thy house then did she chance to die?

ADM. Her father dead, she came an orphan hither.

HERC. Would I had found thee with no grief oppressed.

ADM. With what intent dost thou express thee thus?

HERC. To seek some other hospitable hearth.

ADM. Not so, O king; come not so great an ill.

HERC. To those that mourn, a guest is troublesome.

ADM. Dead are the dead: but enter thou my house.

HERC. Shame that with those who weep a guest should feast.

ADM. We have apartments separate, to receive thee.

HERC. Permit me to depart, much will I thank thee.

- ADM. It must not be: no, to another house
 Thou must not turn aside.—Go thou before,
 Ope those apartments of the house which bear
 A different aspect; give command to those,
 Whose charge it is, to spread the plenteous table;
 And bar the doors between: the voice of woe
 Unseemly heard afflicts the feasting guest.
- CHOR. What wou'dst thou do, Admetus? Such a grief
 Now lying heavy on thee, canst thou bear
 T' admit a guest? Doth this bespeak thee wise?
- ADM. If from my house or city I should drive
 A coming guest, wou'dst thou commend me more?
 Thou wou'dst not: my affliction would not thus
 Be less, but more unhospitable I;
 And to my former ills this further ill
 Be added, I should hear my mansion call'd
 The stranger-hating house. Besides, to me
 His hospitable doors are always open,
 Whene'er I tread the thirsty soil of Argos.
- CHOR. Why didst thou then conceal thy present grief,
 A stranger friend arriving, as thou say'st?
- ADM. My gate he would not enter, had he known
 Of my affliction aught: yet acting thus
 Some may perchance deem me unwise, nor hold me
 Worthy of praise; yet never shall my house
 Know to dishonour or reject a guest.

CHORUS.

- STRO. 1. Yes, liberal house, with princely state
 To many a stranger, many a guest
 Oft hast thou oped thy friendly gate,
 Oft spread the hospitable feast.
 Beneath thy roof Apollo deign'd to dwell,
 Here strung his silver-sounding shell,
 And mixing with thy menial train
 Deign'd to be call'd the shepherd of the plain:
 And as he drove his flocks along,

Whether the winding vale they rove,
 Or linger in the upland grove,
 He tuned the pastoral pipe, or rural song.

STRO. 2. Delighted with thy tuneful lay
 No more the savage thirsts for blood;
 Amidst thy flocks in harmless play
 Wantons the lynx's spotted brood;
 Pleas'd from his lair on Othrys' rugged brow
 The lion seeks the vale below:
 Whilst to thy lyre's melodious sound
 The dappled hinds in sportive measures bound;
 And as the vocal echo rings,
 Lightly their nimble feet they ply,
 Leaving their pine-clad forests high,
 Charm'd with the sweet notes of thy gladdening strings.

ANTIS. 1. Hence is thy house, Admetus, grac'd
 With all that Plenty's hand bestows,
 Near the sweet-streaming current plac'd
 That from the lake of Boëbia flows.
 Far to the west extends the wide domain,
 Rich-pastur'd mead, and cultur'd plain;
 Its bound, the dark Molossian air,
 Where the Sun stations his unharness'd car;
 And stretching to his eastern ray,
 Where Pelion rising in his pride
 Frowns o'er th' Ægean's portless tide,
 Reaches from sea to sea thy ample sway.

ANTIS. 2. Yet wilt thou ope thy gate e'en now,
 E'en now wilt thou receive this guest:
 Though from thine eye the warm tear flow,
 Though sorrow rend thy suffering breast:
 Sad tribute to thy wife, who knew in death
 Lamented lies thy roof beneath.
 But Nature thus her laws decreed,
 The generous mind is prompt to generous deed;
 For all the pow'r of wisdom lies
 Fix'd in the righteous bosom: hence

My soul assumes this confidence,
Fair to the virtuous shall Success arise.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

ADM. Ye citizens of Pheræ, present here
Benevolent to me, my dead adorn'd
With every honour the attendant train
Are bearing to the tomb and funeral pyre.
Do you, for ancient usage so requires,
Address her as she takes her last sad way.

CHOR. Thy father Pheres, see his aged foot
Advances; his attendants in their hands
Bear gorgeous presents, honours to the dead.

PHERES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

PHER. I come, my son, joint sufferer in thy griefs;
For thou hast lost a good and virtuous wife,
None will gainsay it; but thou must perforce
Endure this, though severe. These ornaments
Receive, and let her go beneath the earth:
These honours are her due, since for thy life
She died, my son; nor would she I should be
Childless, nor suffer'd me bereft of thee
To waste in grief my sad remains of life.
The life of all her sex hath she adorn'd
With added lustre by this generous deed.
O thou, that hast preserv'd my son, and rais'd
Our sinking glories, hail! e'en in the house
Of Pluto be thou blest! Such marriages
Pronounce I good; others of little worth.

ADM. Thou comest not to these obsequies by me
Invited, nor thy presence do I deem
Friendly. She never in thy ornaments
Shall be array'd, nor wants she aught of thine
To grace her funeral rites. Then was the time
To shew thy social sorrow, when my life
The Fates demanded: thou cou'dst stand aloof,

Old as thou art, and give a younger up
To die; and wou'dst thou now bewail her death?
Art thou my father? No; nor she, who says
She brought me forth, my mother, though so call'd;
But the base offspring of some slave thy wife
Stole me, and put me to her breast. Thy deeds
Shew what thou art by plain and evident proof:
And never can I deem myself thy son,
Who passest all in mean and abject spirit;
At such an age, just trembling on the verge
Of life, thou wou'dst not, nay, thou daredst not die
For thine own son: but you cou'd suffer her,
Though sprung from foreign blood: with justice then
Her only as my father must I deem,
Her only as my mother; yet this course
Might'st thou have run with glory, for thy son
Daring to die; brief was the space of life
That could remain to thee; I then had lived
My destin'd time, she too had lived, nor thus
Of her forsaken should I wail my loss.
Yet all, that makes man happy, hadst thou prov'd,
Blest through thy life; in royalty thy youth
Grew up; I was thy son t'inherit from thee
Thy treasures; that not childless hadst thou died,
Leaving thy desolated house a prey
To plundering strangers. Neither canst thou say
Thou gavest me up to death as one that held
Thy age in rude contempt; I honour'd thee,
With holy reverence, requited thus
By thee, and her that bore me. Other sons
Wilt thou not therefore speed thee to beget,
To cherish thy old age, to grace thee dead
With sumptuous vest, and lay thee in the tomb?
That office never shall my hand perform,
For, far as in thee lay, I died; if yet
I view this light, fortune presenting me
Other deliverer, his son I am,
With pious fondness to support his age.

Unmeaning is the old man's wish to die,
Of age complaining and life's lengthen'd course;
For, at th' advance of death, none has the will
To die; old age is no more grievous to them.

CHOR. Forbear; enough the present weight of woe?
My son, exasperate not a father's mind.

PHER. Me as some worthless Lydian dost thou rate,
My son, or Phrygian slave bought with thy gold?
Dost thou not know I am Thessalian born,
Of a Thessalian father, truly free?
Opprobrious are thy words, reviling me
With youthful insolence, not quitted so.
I gave thee birth, thence lord of my fair house;
I gave thee nurture, that indeed I owed thee,
But not to die for thee: such law from nature
Receiv'd I not, that fathers for their sons
Should die, nor does Greece know it. For thyself,
Whether misfortune press thee, or thy state
Be happier, thou wast born: thou hast from me
Whate'er behoves thee: o'er an ample realm
Thou now art king, and I shall leave thee more
A large extent of lands; for from my father
These I receiv'd: in what then have I wrong'd thee?
Or what deprived thee? Die not thou for me,
Nor I for thee. Is it to thee a joy
To view the light of heav'n? and dost thou think
Thy father joys not in it? Long I deem
The time below? but little is the space
Of life, yet pleasant. Thou, devoid of shame,
Hast struggled not to die, and thou dost live
Passing the bounds of life assign'd by fate,
By killing her: My mean and abject spirit
Thou dost rebuke, O thou most timid wretch,
Vanquish'd e'en by a woman, who for thee
Her young and beauteous husband freely died.
A fine device that thou might'st never die,
Cou'dst thou persuade who at the time might be
Thy wife to die for thee; yet canst thou load

Thy friends with vile reproach, if they decline
To do it, base and timid as thou art.

But hold thy peace; and think, if life be dear
To thee, it must be dear to all. On us

If thou wilt throw reproaches, thou shalt hear
Enough of thy ill deeds, and nothing false.

CHOR. Too much of ill already hath been spoken:
Forbear, old man, nor thus revile thy son.

ADM. Say what thou wilt, I have declared my thoughts:
But if it gives thee pain to hear the truth,
Much it behoved thee not to wrong me thus.

PHER. Had I died for thee, greater were the wrong.

ADM. Is death alike then to the young and old?

PHER. With one life ought we live, and not with two.

ADM. May'st thou then live a greater age than Jove!

PHER. And dost thou, nothing injured, curse thy parents?

ADM. I saw thee fondly coveting long life.

PHER. Her, that died for thee, wilt thou not entomb.

ADM. These are the tokens of thy abject spirit.

PHER. By us she died not, that thou wilt not say.

ADM. Ah, may'st thou some time come to want my aid!

PHER. Wed many wives, that more may die for thee.

ADM. On thee be that reproach, thou wou'dst not die.

PHER. Sweet is this light of heav'n, sweet is this light.

ADM. Base is thy thought, unworthy of a man.

PHER. Would it not joy thee to entomb my age?

ADM. Die when thou wilt, inglorious wilt thou die.

PHER. An ill report will not affect me dead.

ADM. Alas, alas, how shameless is old age!

PHER. She was not shameless, but thou found'st her mad.

ADM. Begone, and suffer me t' entomb the dead.

PHER. I go: thou shalt entomb her, as thyself

Her murderer; look for vengeance from her friends.

Acastus is no man, if his hands fails

Dearly t' avenge on thee his sister's blood.

ADM. Why get thee gone, thou and thy worthy wife;

Grow old together, as you well deserve,

Childless, your son yet living; never more

Meet we beneath this roof; go; were it decent
 To interdict thee by the herald's voice,
 I would forbid thee ever set thy foot
 Within this mansion of thy ancestors.
 But let us go, since we must bear our ill,
 And place her body on the funeral pyre.

CHOR. O thou unhappy, nobly-daring woman,
 Most generous, brightest excellence, farewell,
 Courteous my Hermes and th' infernal king
 Receive thee: in those realms if aught of grace
 Awaits the virtuous, be those honours thine,
 And be thy seat nigh Pluto's royal bride.

ATT. To many a guest ere now, from various realms
 Arriving, in this mansion have I spread
 The hospitable feast; but at this hearth
 A viler than this stranger never shared
 The bounty of Admetus: though he saw
 My lord oppress'd with grief, it check'd him not,
 He boldly enter'd; nor with sober cheer
 Took the refreshment offer'd; though he knew
 Th' affliction of the house; if what he would
 We brought not on the instant, he enforced
 His harsh commands: and grasping in his hands
 A goblet wreath'd with ivy, fill'd it high
 With the grape's purple juice, and quaff'd it off
 Untemper'd, till the glowing wine inflamed him;
 Then binding round his head a myrtle wreath
 Howls dismal discord; two unpleasing strains
 We heard, his harsh notes, who in nought revered
 Th' afflictions of Admetus, and the voice
 Of sorrow through the family that wept
 Our mistress: yet our tearful eyes we shew'd not,
 Admetus so commanded, to the guest.
 My office bids me wait, and in the house
 Receive this stranger, some designing knave,

Or ruffian robber : she mean time is borne
 Out of the house, nor did I follow her.
 Nor stretch'd my hand lamenting my lost mistress :
 She was a mother to me, and to all
 My fellow servants ; from a thousand ills
 She saved us, with her gentleness appeasing
 Our lord when angry : justly do I hate
 This stranger then, who came amidst our grief.

HERCULES, ATTENDANT.

HERC. You fellow, why that grave and thoughtful look ?
 Ill it becomes a servant's countenance
 To frown on strangers, whom he should receive
 With cheerfulness. A good friend of thy lord
 Is present : all the welcome he can get
 From thee, a sullen and contracted brow,
 Mourning a loss that touches not this house.
 Come hither, that thou may'st be wiser, friend ;
 Know'st thou the nature of all mortal things ?
 Not thou, I ween ; how shou'dst thou ? hear from me :
 By all of human race death is a debt
 That must be paid ; and none of mortal men
 Knows whether till to-morrow life's short space
 Shall be extended : such the dark events
 Of fortune ; never to be learn'd, nor traced
 By any skill : instructed thus by me
 Bid pleasure welcome, drink, the life allow'd
 From day to day esteem thine own, all else
 Fortune's. To Venus chief address thy vows,
 Of all the heavenly pow'rs she, gentle queen,
 Kindest to man, and sweetest : all besides
 Reckless let pass, and listen to my words,
 If thou seest reason in them, as I think
 Thou dost : then bid excessive grief farewell,
 And drink with us ; master these present ills,
 And bind thy brows with garlands ; well I know
 The circling bowl will waft thy spirits to bliss,
 Now sunk in dark and sullen melancholy.

Since we are mortal, be our minds intent
On mortal things; to all the grave, whose brows
With cares are furrow'd, let me judge for thee,
Life is no life, but a calamity.

ATT. These things we know; but what becomes us now
Ill suits with festal revelry and mirth.

HERC. A woman dies, one unrelated; check
Thy grief: the lords of this fair mansion live.

ATT. Live! Know'st thou not th' afflictions of this house?

HERC. Unless thy lord in something hath deceiv'd me.

ATT. Liberal his mind, too liberal to the guest.

HERC. No: for a stranger dead he hath done well.

ATT. No stranger, but a near domestic loss.

HERC. Is it some sorrow which he told not me?

ATT. Go thou with joy; ours are our lord's afflictions.

HERC. These are not words that speak a foreign loss.

ATT. If such, thy revelry had not displeas'd me.

HERC. Then by my friendly host I much am wrong'd.

ATT. Thy coming was unseasonable; this house
Wanted no guest: thou seest our locks all shorn,
Our grief and sable vests.

HERC. Who then is dead?
One of his children, or his aged father?

ATT. His wife Alcestis, stranger, is no more.

HERC. What say'st thou? And e'en so could you receive me?

ATT. It shamed him to reject thee from his house.

HERC. O wretch, of what a wife art thou bereft!

ATT. Not she alone, we all are lost with her.

854. Tragedy hath here descended from her elevation, and vouchsafed to borrow a grace from Comedy. Hercules, observing the gloomy countenance of the attendant, who ought to have entertained him with a festive cheerfulness, and supposing that his grief arose from a trivial cause, comes forth and rallies him in the true Epicurean spirit: not that these are his real sentiments; the high adventure which he had undertaken, and the conclusion of the scene, shew the contrary: the whole was intended as a good-humoured rebuke to the slave for his unseasonable melancholy, which had something inhospitable in it; and this perfectly consistent with manners, time, and place: it gives some relief to the solemn gloom around, and is finely contrasted by that noble resolution in which he reassumes the hero, and shews himself the genuine son of Jupiter.

HERC. I might have thought this when I saw his eye
Flowing with tears, his locks shorn off, and grief
Mark'd on his face: but he persuaded me,
Saying that one of foreign birth he mourn'd,
And bore her to the tomb: unwillingly
Ent'ring these gates I feasted in the house,
My hospitable friend with such a grief
Oppress'd; nay more, I revell'd, and my head
With garlands shaded: but the fault was thine,
Who didst not tell me that a woe like this
Thy house afflicted. But inform me where
She is interr'd; where shall I find her tomb?

ATT. Right in the way that to Larissa leads
Without the city wilt thou find her tomb.

HERC. Now my firm heart, and thou, my daring soul,
Shew what a son the daughter of Electryon,
Alcmena of Tirynthia, bore to Jove.
This lady, new in death, behoves me save,
And, to Admetus rend'ring grateful service,
Restore his lost Alcestis to his house.
This sable-vested tyrant of the dead
My eye shall watch, not without hope to find him
Drinking th' oblations nigh the tomb. If once
Seen from my secret stand I rush upon him,
These arms shall grasp him till his panting sides
Labour for breath; and who shall force him from me,
Till he gives back this woman? Should I fail
To seize him there, as coming not to taste
The spilt blood's thickening foam, I will descend
To the drear house of Pluto and his queen,
Which the sun never cheers, and beg her thence;
Assured that I shall lead her back, and place her
In my friend's hands, whose hospitable heart
Receiv'd me in his house, nor made excuse,
Though pierc'd with such a grief; this he conceal'd
Through generous thought, and reverence to his friend.
Who in Thessalia bears a warmer love
To strangers? Who, through all the realms of Greece?

It never shall be said this generous man
Receiv'd in me a base and worthless wretch.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

ADM. Ah me ! Ah me ! How mournful this approach !
How hateful to my sight this widow'd house !
Ah, whither shall I go ? where shall I rest ?
What shall I say ? or what forbear to say ?
How may I sink beneath this weight of woe ?
To misery was I born, wretch that I am,
I envy now the dead, I long for them,
Long to repose me in that house. No more
With pleasure shall I view the sun's fair beams,
No more with pleasure walk upon this earth :
So dear an hostage death has rent from me,
And yielded to th' infernal king his prey.

CHOR. Go forward, yet go forward ; to thy house
Retire.

ADM. Ah me !

CHOR. Thy sufferings do indeed
Demand these groans.

ADM. O miserable me !

CHOR. Thy steps are set in sorrow, well I know,
But all thy sorrow nought avails the dead.

ADM. Wretch that I am !

CHOR. To see thy wife no more,
No more to see her face, is grief indeed.

ADM. O, thou hast touch'd on that, which deepest wounds
My mind : what greater ill can fall on man,
Than of a faithful wife to be depriv'd ?
O that I ne'er had wedded, in the house
Had ne'er dwelt with her ! The unmarried state
I envy, and deem those supremely blest
Who have no children : in one single life
To mourn, is pain that may be well endured :
To see our children wasting with disease,
To see death ravaging our nuptial bed,
This is not to be borne, when we might pass

Our lives without a child, without a wife.

CHOR. Fate comes, resistless Fate.

ADM. Unhappy me !

CHOR. But to thy sorrows wilt thou put no bounds ?

ADM. Woe, woe, woe, woe !

CHOR. A ponderous weight indeed

To bear, yet bear them. Thou art not the first
That lost a wife : Misery, in different forms
To different men appearing, seizes all.

ADM. Ye lasting griefs, ye sorrows for our friends
Beneath the earth !——Ah, why did ye restrain me ?
I would have cast myself into the tomb,
The gaping tomb, and lain in death with her,
The dearest, best of women ; there for one
Pluto had coupled two most faithful souls,
Together passing o'er th' infernal lake.

CHOR. I had a friend, by birth allied to me,
Whose son, and such a son as claim'd his tears,
Died in the prime of youth, his only child ;
Yet with the firmness of a man he bore
His grief, though childless, and declining age
Led him with hasty steps to hoary hairs.

ADM. Thou goodly mansion, how shall I endure
'To enter thee, how dwell beneath thy roof,
My state thus sunk ! Ah me, how chang'd from that,
When 'midst the pines of Pelion blazing round,
And hymeneal hymns I held my way,
And led my loved Alcestis by her hand :
The festal train with many a cheerful shout
Saluted her, now dead, and me, and hail'd
Our union happy, as descended each
From generous blood, and high-born ancestry.
Now for the nuptial song, the voice of woe ;
For gorgeous robes, this black and mournful garb
Attends me to my halls, and to my couch,
Where solitary sorrow waits me now.

CHOR. This sorrow came upon thee 'midst a state
Of happiness, a stranger thou to ills :

Yet is thy life preserv'd: thy wife is dead,
 Leaving thy love; is there aught new in this?
 Many hath death reft of their wives before.

ADM. My friends, I deem the fortune of my wife
 Happier than mine, though otherwise it seems.
 For never more shall sorrow touch her breast,
 And she with glory rests from various ills.
 But I, who ought not live, my destin'd hour
 O'erpassing, shall drag on a mournful life,
 Late taught what sorrow is. How shall I bear
 To enter here? To whom shall I address
 My speech? Whose greeting renders my return
 Delightful? Which way shall I turn? Within
 In lonely sorrow shall I waste away,
 As widow'd of my wife I see my couch,
 The seats deserted where she sate, the rooms
 Wanting her elegance. Around my knees
 My children hang, and weep their mother lost:
 These too lament their mistress now no more.
 This is the scene of misery in my house:
 Abroad, the nuptials of Thessalia's youth,
 And the bright circles of assembled dames
 Will but augment my grief: ne'er shall I bear
 To see the loved companions of my wife.
 And if one hates me, he will say, Behold
 The man, who basely lives, who dared not die,
 But, giving through the meanness of his soul
 His wife, avoided death, yet would be deem'd
 A man: he hates his parents, yet himself
 Had not the spirit to die. These ill reports
 Cleave to me: why then wish for longer life,
 On evil tongues thus fallen, and evil days.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. My vent'rous foot delights
 To tread the Muses' arduous heights;
 Their hallow'd haunts I love t' explore,
 And listen to their lore:

Yet never could my searching mind
 Aught, like Necessity, resistless find.
 No herb of sovereign pow'r to save,
 Whose virtues Orpheus joy'd to trace,
 And wrote them in the rolls of Thrace;
 Nor all that Phœbus gave,
 Instructing the Asclepian train,
 When various ills the human frame assail,
 To heal the wound, to sooth the pain,
 'Gainst her stern force avail.

ANTIS. 1.

Of all the pow'rs divine
 Alone none dares approach her shrine;
 To her no hallow'd image stands, -
 No altar she commands;
 In vain the victim's blood would flow;
 She never deigns to hear the suppliant vow.
 Never to me may'st thou appear,
 Dread Goddess, with severer mien,
 That oft in life's past tranquil scene
 Thou hast been known to wear.
 By thee Jove works his stern behest:
 Thy force subdues e'en Scythia's stubborn steel:
 Nor ever does thy rugged breast
 The touch of Pity feel.

STRO. 2.

And now, with ruin pleas'd,
 On thee, O king, her hands have seiz'd,
 And bound thee in her iron chain:
 Yet her fell force sustain.
 For from the gloomy realms of night
 No tears recal the dead to life's sweet light.
 No virtue, though to heav'n allied,
 Saves from th' inevitable doom:

1025. Dr. Musgrave rightly observes, that Euripides here alludes to the books which were in his time ascribed to Orpheus, who, besides his wonderful skill in music, was supposed to be the inventor of religious ceremonies, propitiations, and medicine.—Pausaniæ Bæotic. cap. xxx.

1033. Pausanias joins Violence to Necessity, Ἀνάγκης καὶ Βίας ἔστιν ἰσχύς, ἰσχύς δὲ ἰς αὐτὸ οὐ νομιζομένη. Corinth.

Heroes and sons of gods have died,
And sunk into the tomb.

Dear, whilst our eyes her presence blest,
Dear, in the gloomy mansions of the dead;
Most generous she, the noblest, best,
Who graced thy nuptial bed.

ANTIS. 2.

Thy wife's sepulchral mound
Deem not as common, worthless ground,
That swells their breathless bodies o'er,
Who die, and are no more.

No: be it honour'd as a shrine
Rais'd high, and hallow'd to some pow'r divine.
The traveller, as he passes by,
Shall thither bend his devious way,
With reverence gaze, and with a sigh
Smite on his breast, and say,

"She died of old to save her lord;
"Now blest among the blest: Hail, pow'r rever'd;
"To us thy wonted grace afford!"

Such vows shall be preferr'd.

But see, Admetus, to thy house, I ween,
Alcmena's son bends his returning steps.

HERCULES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

HERC. I would speak freely to my friend, Admetus,
Nor what I blame keep secret in my breast.
I came to thee amidst thy ills, and thought
I had been worthy to be proved thy friend.
Thou told'st me not the obsequies prepared
Were for thy wife, but in thy house receiv'dst me
As if thou griev'dst for one of foreign birth.
I bound my head with garlands, to the gods
Pouring libations in thy house with grief
Oppress'd. I blame this: yes, in such a state
I blame this: yet I come not in thine ills
To give thee pain; why I return in brief
Will I unfold. This woman from my hands
Receive to thy protection, till return'd

I bring the Thracian steeds, having there slain
The proud Bistonian tyrant: should I fail,
Be that mischance not mine, for much I wish
Safe to revisit thee, yet should I fail,
I give her to the safeguard of thy house.
For with much toil she came into my hands.
To such as dare contend some public games,
Which well deserv'd my toil, I find propos'd,
I bring her thence, she is the prize of conquest:
For slight assays each victor led away
A courser; but for those of harder proof
The conqueror was rewarded from the herd,
And with some female graced: victorious there,
A prize so noble it were base to slight.
Take her to thy protection, not by stealth
Obtain'd, but the reward of many toils:
The time perchance may come when thou wilt thank me.

ADM. Not that I slight thy friendship, or esteem thee
Other than noble, wish'd I to conceal
My wife's unhappy fate: but to my grief
It had been added grief, if thou hadst sought
Elsewhere the rites of hospitality;
Suffice it that I mourn ills which are mine.
This woman, if it may be, give in charge,
I beg thee, king, to some Thessalian else,
That hath not cause like me to grieve; in Phææ
Thou may'st find many friends; call not my woes
Fresh to my memory; never in my house
Could I behold her, but my tears would flow:
To sorrow add not sorrow; now enough
I sink beneath its weight. Where should her youth
With me be guarded? for her gorgeous vests
Proclaim her young: if mixing with the men
She dwell beneath my roof, how shall her fame,
Conversing with the youths, be kept unsullied?
It is not easy to restrain the warmth
Of that intemperate age: my care for thee
Warns me of this. Or if from them remov'd

I hide her in th' apartments late my wife's,
How to my bed admit her? I should fear
A double blame: my citizens would scorn me
As light, and faithless to the kindest wife
That died for me, if to her bed I took
Another blooming bride; and to the dead
Behoves me pay the highest reverence
Due to her merit. And thou, lady, know,
Whoe'er thou art, that form, that shape, that air
Resembles my Alcestis. By the gods,
Remove her from my sight; it is too much,
I cannot bear it: when I look on her,
Methinks I see my wife; this wounds my heart,
And calls the tears fresh gushing from my eyes.
This is the bitterness of grief indeed.

CHOR. I cannot praise thy fortune; but behoves thee
To bear with firmness what the gods assign.

HERC. O that from Jove I had the pow'r to bring
Back from the mansions of the dead thy wife
To heav'n's fair light, that grace achieving for thee!

ADM. I know thy friendly will: but how can this
Be done? The dead return not to this light.

HERC. Check then thy swelling griefs; with reason rule them.

ADM. How easy to advise, but hard to bear!

HERC. What would it profit shou'dst thou always groan?

ADM. I know it; but I am in love with grief.

HERC. Love to the dead calls forth the ceaseless tear.

ADM. O, I am wretched more than words can speak.

HERC. A good wife hast thou lost, who can gainsay it?

ADM. Never can life be pleasant to me more.

HERC. Thy sorrow now is new, time will abate it.

ADM. Time, say'st thou? Yes, the time that brings me death.

HERC. Some young and lovely bride will bid it cease.

ADM. No more: what say'st thou? Never could I think—

HERC. Wilt thou still lead a lonely, widow'd life?

ADM. Never shall other woman share my bed.

HERC. And think'st thou this will aught avail the dead?

ADM. This honour is her due, where'er she be.

HERC. This hath my praise, though near allied to frenzy.

ADM. Praise me, or not, I ne'er will wed again.

HERC. I praise thee that thou'rt faithful to thy wife.

ADM. Though dead, if I betray her may I die !

HERC. Well, take this noble lady to thy house.

ADM. No, by thy father Jove let me entreat thee.

HERC. Not to do this would be the greatest wrong.

ADM. To do it would with anguish rend my heart.

HERC. Let me prevail; this grace may find its meed.

ADM. O that thou never hadst receiv'd this prize !

HERC. Yet in my victory thou art victor with me.

ADM. 'Tis nobly said : yet let this woman go.

HERC. If she must go, she shall : but must she go ?

ADM. She must, if I incur not thy displeasure.

HERC. There is a cause that prompts my earnestness.

ADM. Thou hast prevail'd, but much against my will.

HERC. The time will come when thou wilt thank me for it.

ADM. Well, if I must receive her, lead her in.

HERC. Charge servants with her ! No, that must not be.

ADM. Lead her thyself then, if thy will incline thee.

HERC. No, to thy hand alone will I commit her.

ADM. I touch her not ; but she hath leave to enter.

HERC. I shall entrust her only to thy hand.

ADM. Thou dost constrain me, king, against my will.

HERC. Venture to stretch thy hand, and touch the stranger's.

ADM. I touch her, as I would the headless Gorgon.

HERC. Hast thou her hand ?

ADM. I have.

HERC. Then hold her safe.

Hereafter thou wilt say the son of Jove

Hath been a generous guest : view now her face,

See if she bears resemblance to thy wife,

And thus made happy bid farewell to grief.

ADM. O gods, what shall I say ? 'Tis marvellous,

Exceeding hope. See I my wife indeed ?

Or doth some god distract me with false joy ?

HERC. In very deed dost thou behold thy wife.

ADM. See that it be no phantom from beneath.

HERC. Make not thy friend one that evokes the shades.

ADM. And do I see my wife, whom I entomb'd?

HERC. I marvel not that thou art diffident.

ADM. I touch her; may I speak to her as living?

HERC. Speak to her; thou hast all thy heart could wish.

ADM. Dearest of women, do see I again

That face, that person? This exceeds all hope:

I never thought that I should see thee more.

HERC. Thou hast her; may no god be envious to thee.

ADM. O, be thou blest, thou generous son of Jove!

Thy father's might protect thee! Thou alone

Hast rais'd her to me; from the realms below

How hast thou brought her to the light of life?

HERC. I fought with him that lords it o'er the shades.

ADM. Where with the gloomy tyrant didst thou fight?

HERC. I lay in wait, and seiz'd him at the tomb.

ADM. But wherefore doth my wife thus speechless stand?

HERC. It is not yet permitted that thou hear

Her voice addressing thee, till from the gods

That rule beneath she be unsanctified

With hallow'd rites, and the third morn return.

But lead her in: and as thou'rt just in all

Besides, Admetus, see thou reverence strangers.

Farewell: I go t' achieve the destin'd toil

For the imperial son of Sthenelus.

ADM. Abide with us, and share my friendly hearth.

HERC. That time will come again; this demands speed.

ADM. Success attend thee: safe may'st thou return.

Now to my citizens I give in charge,

And to each chief, that for this blest event,

They institute the dance, let the steer bleed,

And the rich altars, as they pay their vows,

Breathe incense to the gods; for now I rise

1217. 'Αφ'αγνίζων hoc in loco non significat *purificare*, sed potius *desecrare*, Orcus enim, quando gladio totondisset Alcestidis capillos, eam diis manibus sacram dicaverat, quod diserte ἁγνισαί appellat noster, vide v. 75—77. Contraria igitur aliqua cæremonia desecranda erat, antequam Admeto ejus consuetudine et colloquio frui liceret. *Hesth.*

To better life, and grateful own the blessing.

CHOR. With various hand the gods dispense our fates :
Now showering various blessings, which our hopes
Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ills
We deem'd inevitable : thus the god
To these hath given an end exceeding thought.
Such is the fortune of this happy day.

M E D E A.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NURSE

TUTOR

SONS OF MEDEA

MEDEA

CREON

JASON

ÆGEUS

MESSENGER

CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN DAMES.

MEDEA.

THE celebrated Jason was the son of Æson, who reigned at Iolcos in Thessaly, till Pelias deposed him, and seized the kingdom. As soon as Jason was born, his father, fearing the violence of the usurper, caused a report of the infant's death to be spread, and sent him privately to be educated by Chiron, with whom he continued twenty years. He then returned to Iolcos, and boldly demanded the throne of his fathers. Pelias, struck with his appearance, gave him a gentle answer; but said, that the angry shade of Phrixus had appeared to him in his dreams, commanding him to bring back the golden fleece from Colchis; that he had consulted the oracle at Delphi, and had received a favourable answer; that he was grown old; that Jason was in the vigour of youth, and more equal to the attempt: Go then, says he, achieve this enterprise; and I swear by Jupiter, the author of our race, that I will resign the kingdom to you. The young hero, nothing intimidated by the dangers which Pelias hoped would prove fatal to him, immediately undertook the Argonautic expedition, sailed to Colchis, and demanded the golden fleece. Before this could be obtained, he must yoke two brazen-footed bulls that breathed fire, plough a certain portion of land with them, and sow the teeth of a dragon, from whence an host of armed men would arise, whom he must conquer: if he should succeed in this, he had a still greater danger to contend with, as the golden fleece was guarded by a fierce and wakeful

dragon of an immense size. Æetes, the inhospitable and barbarous king of Colchis, had two daughters, Circe and Medea, both instructed by their mother in the nature and power of roots and herbs : Circe, then married to the king of the Sarmatians, applied her knowledge to the most cruel purposes ; Medea was of a gentler disposition, delighting in acts of humanity, and employing her power in mitigating her father's ferocity, in freeing the strangers, who were driven on that coast, from danger, and in providing for their safety. On the sight of Jason, who was the most beautiful of men, her benevolence was soon warmed into love ; this appeared to be mutual ; she engaged to assist him with all her science, and he swore an inviolable fidelity to her. She performed her promise, preserved him in all these dangers, enabled him to seize the golden fleece, and fled with him to Greece. Pelias in the mean time, upon a report that all the Argonauts had perished, that he might destroy every one who had any claim to his crown, had murdered the father, the mother, and the brother of Jason ; of this he was informed on his arrival at a port of Thessaly near Iolcos, but not seen from thence. What could be done ? Could fifty-three persons with any hopes of success attack a powerful king so strongly guarded ? Or should they draw together the forces of their respective countries, and carry on a confederate war against the tyrant ? Amidst these debates, Medea undertook alone to destroy the king, and deliver the palace into their hands. This she effected. Jason now treated the unhappy daughters of Pelias with the greatest tenderness and honour, delivered the kingdom to Acastus the son of the deceased monarch, and retired with Medea and her two sons to Corinth. He had contracted a close friendship with Creon, the king

of that country, and was honourably received by him : here, unmindful of his obligations and vows to Medea, he abandoned her, and married the daughter of Creon. This infidelity, and the dreadful consequences of it, are the subject of this noble Tragedy.

We are not now to find in Jason the illustrious hero, the chief of the Argonauts, the leader of princes and demigods ; that glorious character is lost in the ungrateful and perfidious husband : guilty, but too proud to acknowledge his guilt, he attempts to justify it with the poorest sophistry, which contradicts and refutes itself : vain of his new alliance, and indifferent to Medea, he has the insolence to boast of the favours he has done her, and would have her esteem him as her benefactor even in the act of injuring her ; and, caught in the snare of his own wretched arguments, he suffers himself to be deceived by her pretended reconciliation, and so becomes instrumental to her revenge. Jason could not be drawn in any other colours ; and the moral poet has finely united to guilt its two inseparable attendants, folly and punishment : but in Medea he has exerted the utmost efforts of his art and genius. This illustrious princess, the daughter of a powerful king, descended from the Sun, and, celebrated for her science, found herself on a sudden forsaken by the man she loved, whom she had saved from inevitable destruction, for whom she had betrayed her father and her country, whose fortunes she had followed, or rather directed, for eight years, and whom she had never offended : thus injured by her faithless husband, insulted by Creon, and rudely driven with her two sons from his kingdom, she feels her misfortunes in their full force, and meditates the severest vengeance ; to effect which she accommodates herself to every cir-

cumstance ; is condescending and insinuating to the Corinthian dames who form the Chorus, submissive to Creon, courteous and suppliant to Ægeus : at her first interview with Jason she reproaches him with severity, but with a calm dignity, sustains her superiority even in her utmost distress, and refuses the offer of his treasures with a generous indignation : but as soon as she had secured a place of refuge, her fiery and impatient spirit flames out, and her whole soul is bent on revenge. Creon had not only betrothed his daughter to Jason, but had treated her with the greatest indignity ; his daughter had alienated the affections of her husband from her : and should the race of Sisypheus, whom she held in contempt, triumph in her misfortunes, and make a jest of her ruin ? They must perish : the account of their death is dreadfully great. For Jason a punishment still more dreadful was reserved : she had two sons by him, and was passionately fond of them, but she knew that the father would be most sensibly wounded through them ; she therefore determined to kill them. The struggle indeed was great. The poet has given this fierce and vindictive character all the tenderness of a mother ; he had otherwise outraged nature, and drawn an Ate hot from hell, not a woman : she acknowledges that the dreadful deed would fill her own heart with anguish ; but Jason would suffer in it ; there the flames of revenge blaze out, and every softer consideration gives place to their terrible fury. Thus the astonished Jason finds himself at once deprived of his bride, deprived of his sons, and even of the mournful satisfaction of burying them, and is left to grow old in misery, and at length to perish wretchedly ; whilst the implacable Medea flies from Corinth through the air in a chariot drawn by winged dragons.

This seems to have been a favourite subject with the ancients. Ennius translated the *Medea* of Euripides into Latin; Ovid wrote a tragedy on the same story; and Mæcenas is said to have added to the number; these are lost: had the *Medea* of Seneca undergone the same fate, good taste and literature would have suffered no great loss. With him *Medea* is uniformly in a rage; and when he should have been tracing the workings of a feeling mind, he puts us cheaply off with turgid declamation, or uninteresting description. The wise and learned *Medea* of Euripides is here a sorceress that shocks us; the whole fourth Act is taken up with her horrid incantations, of which P. Brumoy says well, *c'est moins un enchantement magique, qu'un hurlement infernal*. After the robe is thus enchanted, she sends her sons with it to the bride to procure her favour to them, though Creon had promised to treat them with a father's tenderness, and Jason had declared the same in the warmest and most affectionate terms; which destroys the motive for sending them so finely contrived by the Greek poet. The effects of this fatal robe, which by Euripides are described with so minute a simplicity that we are led from light circumstances to deeper and deeper horrors, are here represented in general and unaffecting terms as a raging fire which had consumed the palace, and endangered the city. *Medea* now proceeds to the murder of her sons, to punish them for their father's guilt,

Vos pro paternis sceleribus pœnas date,

which totally mistakes the intention, and destroys the effect. Her irresolution, the struggles between nature and revenge, and her pathetic parting with her children,

had formed in Euripides a scene too beautiful to be omitted ; but all the tenderness of it is extinguished by a burst of madness, in which Medea sees ghosts and furies : she then outrageously wishes for as many children as Niobe had, that she might destroy them all ; massacres one in the sight of the father, and then departs in her car drawn by winged dragons. Yet after all these scenes of rage, horror, and slaughter, the conduct of Creon and the infidelity of Jason are so mitigated, that they are scarcely culpable ; the former was threatened with a war by Acastus, if he longer gave refuge to Medea ; prudence therefore required him to send her away ; and Jason was compelled to yield to her banishment by both the kings, *hinc rex, et illinc* ; and what most prevailed with him was his affection to his children, who could not otherwise be saved : nay further, he had by his tears and entreaties obtained of Creon that the sentence of death, which he would have denounced against her, might be softened into that of banishment ; so that he is represented rather as an unhappy man, than as a faithless and perjured husband, and as such is the object of pity ; whilst Medea, without sufficient cause transported with a blind and ungovernable rage, is no longer an injured and resentful wife, but an infernal fury, and the object of abhorrence ; and this totally destroys the moral of the drama, whose intention it was to display the dreadful consequences of infidelity in the connubial state.

The great Corneille, with these two different models before him, was so unhappy as to imitate the splendid faults of Seneca, rather than the chaste simplicity of Euripides. It gives one pain ever to mention this excellent person but in terms of the highest praise, which is justly due to his merits both as a poet and a

man ; but truth extorts this unwilling censure on his Medée ; yet even his faults are the ebullitions of a great genius too much indulging a rich and vivid imagination. P. Brumoy was led by the nature of his undertaking to examine this tragedy, which however is not one of Corneille's best productions, of which he was himself fully sensible ; the critic's observations are judicious : to them the reader is referred, as whatever degree of censure there may be in them, it comes with more propriety from the poet's countryman, than from a stranger who wishes only to commend, and apologizes in the words of Brumoy, *Il ne m'appartient pas de faire le procès à Corneille. Il faut respecter jusqu'aux défauts des grands hommes.*——Il seroit seulement à souhaiter qu'il n'eût pas quelquefois porté l'imitation de Sénèque et de Lucain jusqu'à épouser leurs défauts. Après tout, cela ne diminue en rien la gloire d'un si grand Génie, qui a toujours enchéri sur ses modèles.

The Scene is in the vestibule of the palace of Jason at Corinth.



MEDEA.

THE NURSE OF MEDEA.

O THAT the gallant Argo had not wing'd
Her course to Colchis through the clashing rocks
Of the black Euxine; that in Pelion's groves
The pine had ne'er been fell'd; nor at the oars
The heroes' hands had labour'd when they sought
The golden fleece for Pelias; then my queen,
Medea, had not plough'd the wat'ry way
To tower'd Iolcos, madd'ning with the love
Of Jason; nor, the daughters won to slay
Their father Pelias, had she fix'd her seat
At Corinth, with her husband and her sons;
A pleasing flight indeed to those, whose land
She made her residence; whilst every thought,
Studious to aid him, was on Jason fix'd.
This is the state of firmest happiness,

2. The Cyaneæ Petrae, or Symplegades, were two rocks in the mouth of the Euxine sea, said to meet together with prodigious violence, and crush the passing ships. Pindar gives a very animated account of them, and even says that they were alive, till the expedition of the Argonauts brought death to them:

Ἐς δὲ κίνδυνον βαθὺν ἵμενοι,
δισπότην λίσσοντο ναῶν,
συνδρόμων κινήδμῳ ἀμαιμάκετον
ἐκφυγεῖν πετρᾶν. δίδυμοι γὰρ ἔσαν
ζωαὶ, κυλινδίσκοντό τε κραιπνότεραι
ἢ βαρυγδοῦπαν ἄνέμων σίχεις· ἀλ-
λ' ἤδη τελευτᾶν κείνος αὐταῖς
ἡμιθίων πλόος ἔ-
γαγεν. Pyth. iv. 368.

When from the husband no discordant will
The wife estranges; but their dearest ties
Of love are loosen'd, all is variance now
And hate: for Jason, to his children false,
False to my mistress, for a royal bride
Hath left her couch, and wedded Creon's daughter,
Lord of this land. Ill doth Medea brook
This base dishonour; on his oaths she calls,
Recals their plighted hands, the firmest pledge
Of mutual faith, and calls the gods to witness
What a requital she from Jason finds.
Of food regardless, and in sorrow sunk
She lies, and melts in tears each tedious hour
Since first she knew her lord had injured her;
Nor lifts her eye, nor lifts her face from th' earth,
Deaf to her friends' entreaties as a rock,
Or billow of the sea; save when she turns
Her snowy neck, and to herself bewails
Her father, and her country, and her house,
Which she betray'd to follow this base man,
Who treats her now with such indignity.
Affliction now hath taught her what it is
Not to forsake a parent and his house.
She hates her children, nor with pleasure sees them.
I fear her, lest she form some strange design;
For violent her temper, and of wrongs
Impatient: well I know her, and I fear her,
Lest in the dead of night, when all are laid
In deep repose, she steal into the house,
And plunge into their breast the piercing sword,
Or murder e'en the monarch of the land,
Or the new-married Jason, on herself
Drawing severer ills; for like a storm
Her passions swell; and he, that dares enrage her,
Will have small cause to boast his victory.
But see, her sons from the gymnastic ring
Returning, heedless of their mother's ill,
For youth holds no society with grief.

TUTOR *with the* SONS OF MEDEA, NURSE.

- TUT. Thou old domestic servant of my mistress,
 Why dost thou take thy station at the gates,
 And ruminate in silence on thy griefs?
 How hath Medea wish'd to be alone?
- NUR. Thou good old man, attendant on the sons
 Of Jason, faithful servants with their lords
 Suffer in their afflictions, and their hearts
 Are touch'd with social sorrow; and my griefs
 Swell, for Medea's sufferings, to such height
 That strong desire impell'd me to come forth
 And tell them to the earth and to the skies.
- TUT. Admits she yet no respite to her groans?
- NUR. I wonder at thee: no, these ills but now
 Are rising, to their height not yet advanc'd.
- TUT. Unwise, if of our lords we so may speak,
 Since she knows nothing of more recent ills.
- NUR. What may this be? refuse not to inform me.
- TUT. Nothing; and I repent of what I said.
- NUR. Nay, by this beard conceal it not from me,
 Thy fellow-servant; if occasion calls
 For secrecy, in silence will I keep it.
- TUT. I heard one say, not seeming to attend,
 But passing on to where they play with dice,
 Amongst the grave old men, who then by chance
 Were sitting near Pirene's hallow'd stream,
 That Creon, lord of this fair land, will drive
 These children, and their mother, from the state
 Of Corinth: whether this report be true
 I know not, but I wish it otherwise.
- NUR. Will Jason bear to see his sons thus wrong'd,

76. Chilon the Lacedæmonian, being sent to Corinth to form an alliance with that state, found the chiefs and elders of the people playing at dice. He therefore returned without executing his commission, declaring that he would not stain the glory of the Spartans with such an infamy, as that they might be said to have contracted an alliance with players at dice. For this we are indebted to Dr. Musgrave.

78. Pirene is a fountain of the purest water, which rises behind the temple of Venus in the ascent of the Acrocorinthus, and flows through the city.

Though he regards their mother now no more?

TUT. To new alliances the old give place,
And to this house he is no more a friend.

NUR. Ruin would follow, to the former ill
If this were added e'er the first subsides.

TUT. Be cautious then: it were unseasonable
Our queen knew this; in silence close thy lips.

NUR. You hear, my children, how your father's mind
Is towards you: yet I wish not ruin on him,
He is my lord, though to his friends unkind.

TUT. What mortal knows not—thou may'st know it hence—
Each for himself conceives a dearer love
Than for his neighbour; some by glory, some
By gain induced: what wonder then if these,
Of his new nuptials found, their father love not!

NUR. Go in, my children, go: all will be well:
And take thou heed, keep them aloof, nor let them
Come near their mother whilst her griefs are fresh;
Cruel her eye, and wild, I mark'd it late,
Expressive of some dark design on these:
Nor will she check her fury, well I know,
Till the storm bursts on some one; may its stroke
Fall on some hostile head, not on a friend.

MED. Wretch that I am, what anguish rends my heart; [*within*.
Wretched Medea, how art thou undone!

NUR. Aye, thus it is. Your mother, my dear children,
Swells with resentment, swells with rage: go in,
Go quickly in; but come not in her eye,
Approach her not, but keep you from the wild
And dreadful fury of her violent temper.
Go now, go quickly in; this rising cloud
Of grief forbodes a storm which soon will fall
With greater rage: inflamed with injuries
What will not her tempestuous spirit dare?

MED. Ah me, ah me, what mighty wrongs I bear,
Wrongs that demand my tears and loud laments!
Ye sons accurs'd of a detested mother,
Perish, together with your father perish,

And in one general ruin sink your house !

NUR. Ah me unhappy, in their father's fault
 Why make thy sons associates ? Why on them
 Rises thy hatred ? O, I fear, I fear,
 My children, lest some evil threatens you.
 Kings have a fiery quality of soul,
 Accustom'd to command, if once they feel
 Control, though small, their anger blazes out
 Not easily extinguish'd ; hence I deem
 An equal mediocrity of life
 More to be wish'd ; if not in gorgeous state,
 Yet without danger glides it on to age.
 There's a protection in its very name,
 And happiness dwells with it : but the height
 Of tow'ring greatness long to mortal man
 Remains not fix'd ; and, when misfortune comes
 Enraged, in deeper ruin sinks the house.

NURSE, CHORUS.

CHOR. I heard the voice, I heard the loud laments
 Of the unhappy Colchian : do her griefs,
 Say reverend matron, find no respite yet ?
 From the door's opening valve I heard her voice,
 No pleasure in the sorrows of your house
 I take ; for deeds are done not grateful to me.

NUR. This is no more a house, all here is vanish'd,
 Nor leaves a trace behind. The monarch's house
 He makes his own ; whilst my unhappy mistress
 In her lone chamber melts her life away
 In tears, unmoved by all the arguments
 Urged by her friends to sooth her sorrowing soul.

MED. O that th' ethereal lightning on this head
 Would fall ! Why longer should I wish to live ?
 Unhappy me ! Death would be welcome now,
 And kindly free me from this hated life.

CHOR. Dost thou hear this, O Jove, O Earth, O Light,
 The mournful voice of this unhappy dame ?
 Why thus indulge this unabated force

Of nuptial love, self-rigorous hast'ning death?
 Let it not be thy wish: if a new bed
 Now charms thy husband, be not his offence
 Engraved too deep: Jove will avenge thy wrongs;
 Let not thy sorrows prey upon thy heart.

MED. O powerful Themis, O revered Diana,
 See what I suffer, though with sacred oaths
 This vile accursed husband I had bound!
 O might I one day see him and his bride
 Rent piecemeal in their house, who unprovok'd
 Have dared to wrong me thus! Alas my father,
 Alas my country, whom my shameful flight
 Abandon'd, having first my brother slain!

NUR. You hear her invocations, how she calls
 On Themis, prompt to hear the suppliant's vows,
 And Jove, th' avenger of neglected oaths
 To mortal man: nor is it possible
 Her fiery transports know a moment's pause.

CHOR. What motives can be urged to draw her forth?
 Could we but see her, would she hear our voice,
 Haply our pleaded reason might avail
 To sooth her soul, and mitigate her rage.
 My zeal shall not be wanting to my friends.
 Go then, persuade her forth, with soft address
 Allure her hither: haste, thou friendly dame,
 E'er her resentment burst on those within;
 For her full grief swells to a dreadful height.

NUR. I will attempt it, though I fear my voice
 Will not prevail; yet does your friendly zeal
 Claim from me this return; but to her slaves,
 When they approach to speak to her, she bears
 The aspect of a furious lioness,
 That watches o'er her young. If thou shou'dst say
 That men of former times were unadvis'd,
 Shallow, and nothing wise, thou wou'dst not err:
 For festivals, for banquets, and for suppers
 They form'd the sprightly song, that charm'd the ear,
 Making life cheerful: but with music's pow'r,

And the sweet symphony of varied strains,
 They knew not to assuage the piercing griefs
 That rack the heart, whence deaths and ruthless deeds
 Spreads desolation: here to sooth the soul
 With lenient songs, were wisdom: where the feast
 Is spread, why raise the tuneful voice in vain?
 The table richly piled hath in itself
 A cheerfulness that wakes the heart to joy.

CHOR. I heard her lamentations mix'd with groans,
 Which in the anguish of her heart she vents;
 And on her faithless husband, who betray'd
 Her bed, she calls aloud; upon the gods
 Thus basely wrong'd she calls, attesting Themis,
 Daughter of Jove, the arbitress of oaths,
 Who led her to the shores of Greece, across
 The rolling ocean, when the shades of night
 Darken'd its waves, and steer'd her through the straits.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Ye dames of Corinth, I come forth, that you
 In nought may blame me: many have I known
 Of honourable birth, who lost respect,
 Some, for retiring from the public eye,
 And others, as too lavish of their presence:
 And some, who loved the calm of peaceful life,
 Have been defamed as spiritless and slothful;
 For 'tis not by the eye we rightly judge
 Of truth; whoe'er, before he knows the heart,
 Conceives dislike by sight, in nothing wrong'd,
 Does ill. A stranger with peculiar heed
 Should form him to the temper of the state;
 Nor would I praise the native, who through pride
 And shallow thought, is to his citizens
 Wayward and insolent. For me, I sink
 Beneath this unexpected weight of ill
 Which falls upon me: all the joys of life,
 And all its glory have I lost, my friends,
 And death is now my wish: for he, in whom

My heart had treasured all its boast and pride,
Proves faithless, and the basest of mankind.
Thus is it, of all beings, that have life
And sense, we women are most wretched: first
With all our dearest treasures we must buy
A husband, and in him receive a lord:
An hardship this: a greater hardship yet
Awaits us; here's the question, if this lord
Prove gentle, or a tyrant; if the worst,
To disunite our nuptials hurts our fame,
Nor from the husband may our sex withdraw
The plighted hand; hence they, who change their state,
Passing to untried tempers and new laws,
Need a prophetic spirit, as at home
Untaught, to choose their lord. If all our care
Gives us a gentle husband, one that binds
No galling yoke, happy our life indeed;
If not, death were more welcome. If the man
Finds aught displeasing in his house, abroad
He seeks relief, 'mongst his compeers or friends
Uneasy thought diverting; whilst our eyes
Perforce are fix'd on one. Yet will they say
We live an easy life, at home, secure
From danger, whilst they lift the spear in war:
Misjudging men; thrice would I stand in arms
On the rough edge of battle, e'er once bear
The pangs of childbirth. But to thee these words
Have not the force I feel in them; for thine
This country, thine a father's house, the wealth
That brightens life, the sweet society
Of friends is thine: I am an outcast wretch,
Abandon'd, by my husband basely wrong'd,
Borne from a foreign country as a prize.
I have no mother, brother, kinsman here,
To shelter me from this calamity.
Yet would I beg of thee this little grace,
If aught may be devis'd, ought plann'd, these ills
With justice on my husband to repay,

On him that gave his daughter, and on her
Whom he hath wedded, to be silent: for
A woman timid else, ill form'd to deeds
Of daring courage, at th' uplifted sword
Appall'd, when injur'd in her nuptial bed
Feels her soul swell with rage that calls for blood.

CHOR. This will I do: with justice dost thou seek
Revenge: no marvel that thy wrongs afflict thee.
But Creon, see, the monarch of this land,
Advances, fraught, belike, with some new counsels.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

CRE. To thee, of aspect gloomy, of a soul
Enraged against thy husband, my command
I give, to thee, Medea: Hie thee hence,
An exile from this country; thy two sons
Take with thee; linger not; for this decree
Is mine, I will enforce it, nor my house
Revisit more till I have driven thee forth
Beyond the utmost confines of this realm.

MED. Ah me! unhappy me! Now must I sink,
Lost, lost; for stretching every sail my foes
Press on, nor can I gain the sheltering shore.
Yet will I ask thee, injured as I am,
Why, Creon, dost thou drive me from this land?

CRE. I fear thee; for I see no cause to use
Ambiguous phrase, lest thou attempt some deed
Against my daughter which no medicine
Can heal; by many a circumstance this fear
Is strengthen'd; thou art famed for knowledge, vers'd
In dangerous science, and resentment now
Inflames thee, from thy husband's bed estranged.
Thy menaces, for they have reach'd mine ear,
Breathe vengeance on the father that betroth'd her,
On him that wedded her, on her that gave
Her plighted hand: with caution shall I guard
Against these threaten'd mischiefs; better now
Incur thy hate, than soften'd by thy words

Repent hereafter of my foolish pity.

- MED. Ah me! not first hath this opinion now
Been hurtful to me; often have I felt
The evil of it. Prudence would direct
The parent not to train his children's minds
Too deep in wisdom's lore: for that, beside
Their love of ease, they from their citizens
Gain nothing but malevolence and envy.
If to malignant folly thou hold out
Some new discover'd wisdom, thou wilt seem
Useless, not wise; to those, who pride themselves
In their much wisdom, thy superior fame
Will give offence. I feel this; for in some
My knowledge raises envy: others deem me
'Too easy; of discordant manners some,
Some wayward; yet my knowledge is not much.
By thee too I am fear'd, lest I should work thee
Some harsher mischief: No, not such my state,
Fear me not, Creon, as to dare offend
'Gainst persons of imperial dignity.
And wherein hast thou wrong'd me? Thou hast given
Thy daughter where it pleas'd thee: but I hate
My husband: thou, I ween, with prudent thought
Hast form'd these measures, and thy fair success
I envy not; form your alliances,
And be they fortunate; but let me dwell
Here in your land; in silence will I bear
My wrongs, submitting to superior pow'r.
- CRE. These are fair words, and soothing to the ear;
But ill intent, I fear, lurks in thy heart;
The less for this will I confide in thee.
A woman, or a man, whose fiery spirit
Flames out with anger, puts us on our guard,
More than the prudent calmness that conceals
Its hate in silence: therefore get thee gone
With speed; no more of speeches; my decree
May not be moved; not all thy art shall win me
To let thee stay, thus dangerous as thou art.

- MED. By thy new-wedded daughter, at thy knees——
CRE. Thou wou'dst waste words; for ne'er shalt thou prevail.
MED. Hence wilt thou drive me, nor revere my pray'rs?
CRE. I love thee not more than my family.
MED. Now, O my country! I remember thee.
CRE. My country, next my children, is most dear.
MED. Alas, what fatal ills love works to man!
CRE. That is, I ween, as fortune guides th' event.
MED. Remember, Jove, the author of these ills.
CRE. Be gone, slight woman, free me from my care.
MED. Care's are my portion, and no niggard store.
CRE. Quickly my guards shall drag thee hence by force.
MED. Not that, let not that be: I beg thee, Creon——
CRE. Thou wilt give trouble, woman, I perceive.
MED. I will away: 'tis not for that I beg——
CRE. Why then this struggle? Why not quit the land?
MED. One day, indulge me this, one single day,
To recollect my thoughts, to plan my course,
And make some poor provision for my sons,
Since that their father shews no care for them.
Have pity on them; thou hast children, thou
Be sure must feel a father's tenderness,
I care not for myself, since I must go
An outcast, but I weep for their distress.
CRE. Mine is no barbarous and unfeeling heart,
But touch'd with pity, often to my hurt:
And now, though reason tells me I do wrong,
Thou shalt obtain thy wish: but mark me well,
If yon bright sun to-morrow in these realms
Behold thee and thy children, thou shalt die:
My word is pass'd, and thou shalt find it true.
One single day, if so thy needs require,
I will indulge thee; in that little space
Thou wilt not do the horrid deeds I dread.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

- CHOR. Unhappy woman, in thy hopeless state
Unhappy, which way wilt thou turn? What house,

What hospitable country wilt thou find
A refuge for thy griefs? Ah, what a tide
Of misery thy fate rolls swelling on!

MED. On every side I am inclosed with ills;
But not in this part; no, deem not in this.
Now with the bridegroom and his bride remains
The contest, and to all allied to them
No small affliction. Think'st thou I would cringe,
And fawn upon this man, but with some view
Of interest or design? I would not else
Have oped my lips to him; or touch'd his hand.
But mark his folly; when he might have crush'd
All my designs by chasing me from hence,
He granted me this day; and in this day
My vengeance shall o'ertake my three great foes,
The father, and my husband, and the bride.
But of the many deaths at my command,
I know not which, my friends, I first shall try.
Shall I with flames destroy this bridal house?
Or in the dead of night, when all are laid
In deep repose, enter with silent step,
And plunge into their breast the piercing sword?
Yet one thing is against me; in the house
If I am seiz'd in such an enterprise,
I by my death shall gratify my foes,
Made their derision. Better then pursue
The path in which my science best is vers'd,
And kill them by enchantments. Be it so;
And they are dead: what city will receive me?
What land will shelter me? What faithful house
Open its hospitable gates, my life
Protecting? None. Pause then a moment's space,
If some safe fortress haply may be found,
With specious wiles in silence plan their death.
But if ill fortune with resistless force
Drive me from this attempt, this hand shall wield
The sword, and kill them, reckless of my life,
For to the height of daring am I come.

Now by the goddess, whom I most revere,
 And chose for my assistant, Hecate,
 Who in the deep recesses of my house
 Hath placed her awful seat, not one of them,
 That wring my heart, shall glory in the deed.
 These nuptials will I make unpleasant to them
 And mournful; this alliance shall they rue,
 And rue my flight. Rouse thee, Medea, wake
 Thy deepest science, meditate, devise,
 Call forth thy terrible pow'r: the contest now
 Demands a daring spirit: dost thou feel
 Thy sufferings? Vindicate thy glorious birth;
 Nor let the daughter of the Sun be made
 The mockery of the race of Sisyphus
 By Jason's nuptials: thou hast skill, and art
 A woman; Nature form'd our sex to good
 Of slight capacity, but to revenge
 Of ready and inventive subtlety.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Refluent and mounting to their source
 The sacred streams are roll'd;
 And Truth no more her righteous course
 Nor Justice knows to hold:
 All things are chang'd: insidious trains
 Are man's; nor heav'nly Faith remains.
 These things our glory shall restore;
 And brightening in the rolls of fame
 Honour shall grace the female name,
 Opprobrious now no more.

ANTIS. 1. To merit just the vocal Muse
 Shall change her ancient vein,
 Nor faithless woman more accuse
 In ev'ry taunting strain.
 Had Phœbus, leader of the lay,
 Bade the sweet lyre our hands obey,
 We too had tuned the taunting air;
 For tales enough in records old

Of woman's falsehood have been told;
Nor wants proud man his share.

STRO. 2. 'Thou from thy father's royal house cou'dst rove,
And all thy heart was mad with love;
Through clashing rocks advent'rous sweep,
Brave the rude dangers of the deep,
And rest upon a foreign strand;
There all thy loves, thy transports fled,
An outcast from thy nuptial bed,
Driv'n with disgrace an exile from the land.

ANTIS. 2. Reverence of oaths and honest Shame their reign
In spacious Greece no more maintain;
But from the earth indignant fly,
Shake their light wings, and seek the sky.
Thine is thy father's house no more;
There no kind shelter shalt thou know,
But these new nuptials pierc'd with woe;
Here reigns another queen of greater pow'r.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. This is not new; for oft have I observ'd
That stubborn anger is an evil, harsh
And not to be appeas'd. The pow'r was thine
To hold thy residence in this land, this house,
Cou'dst thou have learn'd with gentleness to yield
Submission to its lords; but thy rash tongue
Hath wrought thy exile. Nought with me indeed
Weighs thy intemperate and ceaseless speech,
Reviling Jason as the worst of men.
The rulers brook not this; and for th' abuse
Cast on them, deem them gentle that no worse
Than banishment befalls thee. I have still
Soften'd the anger of the men in pow'r,
Desirous of thy stay; but from thy taunts
Thy folly knows no respite, the great lords
Reviling still; thou therefore art cast forth
An exile. Nor for this do I desert
My friends, but come to make provision for thee,
That without treasures, or in want of aught,

Thou with thy children might'st not leave the land.
Exile draws many evils in its train ;
But though thou hate me, lady, in return
I never can be wrought to wish thee ill.

MED. O thou most vile, this black reproach my tongue
Owes thy unmanly baseness, thou art come,
To me art come, most hateful to the gods,
And me, and all mankind. Not fortitude
Nor virtuous confidence is this, to look
On a friend's face after such injuries ;
But shamelessness, the foulest worst disease
That blackens in the breast. Yet dost thou well
Thus coming; for to vent reproaches on thee
Will ease my heart, and give thee pain to hear them.
This subject to its fountain will I trace.
I saved thee, as the Grecian chieftains know
Who in the Argo shared this enterprize
With thee, when sent to bend beneath the yoke
The bulls whose breath was fire, and in the ground
To sow the direful seed. The dragon, placed
A sleepless guard to keep the golden fleece,
Voluminous in many a scaly fold
I slew, and to thee rais'd the light of life.
My father and my house betray'd, with thee
I to Iolcos plough'd the wat'ry way,
By fondness rather than by prudence led
Pelias I slew, and, what embitter'd death,
By his own daughters: thus from every fear
I freed thee: and for all these bounties to thee,
O thou most vile of men, hast thou betray'd me,
And in new nuptials lightly placed thy joys:
Yet thou hast children, this were venial else,
Of this fresh wife to be enamour'd thus,
Were my bed barren. Vanish'd is the faith
Of oaths; perchance thou deem'st those gods not now
The rulers of the sky, but that new lords
Now reign, and give new laws to mortal man,
For thou art conscious of thy perjuries.

Oft hast thou hung upon this hand, these knees
 Too oft have been polluted by the touch
 Of this base man, for what but to deceive me?
 Ah me, how am I fallen from all my hopes!
 Well: I will yet address thee as a friend,
 As if I hoped some mighty favour from thee;
 My questions too will shew thee yet more base.
 Now which way shall I turn me! Shall I go
 Back to my country and my father's house?
 These I betray'd for thee. Or to the daughters
 Of Pelias? 'Midst their sorrows they will open
 Their friendly gates to me, for that I slew
 Their father. Thus it is; I have made those
 Averse to me, whom nature form'd my friends;
 Those, who of me deserv'd no ill, to win
 Thy grace, I gave just cause to be my foes.
 And for these favours 'mongst the dames of Greece
 Me hast thou made most happy; I have gain'd
 A glorious husband, and of wond'rous faith,
 Wretch that I am! If outcast hence I go
 A lonely exile, with thy lonely sons,
 Of friends forsaken, high renown this brings
 To the new-married husband, that his sons
 Are wandering beggars, and myself who saved thee.
 O Jove, why hast thou given us certain proof
 To know adulterate gold, but stamp'd no mark,
 Where it is needed most, on man's base metal?

CHOR. When friends with friends at variance kindle strife,
 Fierce is their anger and immedicable.

JAS. Behoves me here, it seems, to dress my speech
 With no small care; but like a skilful pilot
 To edge along the wind, and steer my course
 Through all this irksome storm of boisterous words.
 I, since thy favours are thus magnified,
 Deem Venus, and none else of gods or men,
 My guardian in that voyage. Thou art vers'd
 In fine-drawn reasonings, but to trace this theme,
 How love impell'd thee in these dangerous toils

To save me, were invidious; with nice hand
I shall not weigh these things; but where thy aid
Work'd aught of good, thy boast is not amiss.
Yet from my safety more hast thou receiv'd,
Than thou didst give; this I shall prove to thee.
In Greece, instead of a barbaric land,
Thou hast thy habitation, there to know
What justice is, and what the guardian pow'r
Of law, uninfluenced by tyrannic force:
Through Greece thy wisdom is confess'd, thy name
In high renown; but hadst thou pass'd thy days
In the wild corners of that distant land,
Fame had been silent of thee. In my house
I would not wish for gold, I would not wish
To breathe th' enchanting melody of song
Surpassing Orpheus, would not fortune place me
Where I might shine conspicuous. Of my toils
This have I said, since thou hast urged me to it.
But for my royal nuptials since thy tongue
Reviles me, I will shew thee they were form'd
With prudence, not through wantonness, to thee
And to thy sons most friendly.—Hold thy peace.—
When from Iolcos hither I was come,
And brought with me Misfortune's numerous train,
What happier measure, exile as I was,
Could prudence dictate to me, than to wed
The daughter of the monarch of the land?
Not through disgust, or loathing of thy bed,
Which cuts thy heart, nor struck with fond desire
Of my new bride, nor emulous to raise
A numerous offspring; with the sons I have
Well satisfied, I there have no complaint:
But, what imports us most, that we might live
With dignity, nor be constrain'd with want;
Knowing that every friend from poverty
Keeps him aloof: thy sons too would I train,
As suits my house, in splendor: if to thine
I should add brothers, I would make one house

Of all, a friendly union, and my state
Would flourish: thou indeed of other sons
May'st have small need; but it imports me much,
To raise my present progeny by that
Which may arise: have I design'd amiss?
But that the nuptial bed afflicts thy heart,
Thou wou'dst not say it; but your wayward sex
In this are all united, if your bed
Be safe, you think every thing is yours:
But if mischance befalls it, what before
Was excellent and lovely you decry
As hateful. Had some other way been found
To generate mankind, the female race
Not form'd, this mischief had not then befall'n us.

CHOR. Well, Jason, hast thou glozed thy artful tale;
Yet must my thought, reluctantly I speak it,
Deem thee unjust, betraying thus thy wife.

MED. In many things to many mortals much
Unlike I judge; th' injurious man, whose tongue
Flows with pernicious rhetoric, I hold
To merit the severest punishment.
For confident his speech can varnish o'er
The blackest deeds, his craft dares venture on them.
It is not wisdom; nor dost thou appear
To me in splendid colours, nor thy speech
Persuasive; with a word will I confute it.
These nuptials, wast thou not dishonest, ought
T' have been contracted, my consent first ask'd
And won, not from thy friends thus close conceal'd.

JAS. Fine service hadst thou done me in this cause,
Had I inform'd thee, when e'en now thy heart
Swells with a storm of unabated rage.

MED. That moved thee not; but a barbaric bed
Wants dignity, belike, to grace thy age.

JAS. Nay, be assured of this, I did not choose
The king's alliance for the lady's sake:
But, as I said before, it was my wish
To save thee from distress, and to my sons

Raise royal brothers to protect my house.

MED. Ne'er be such wretched happiness my lot;
Nor wealth be mine, that rends my bleeding heart.

JAS. Dost thou not know to form a different wish,
And appear wiser? Things of highest profit
Charge not with wretchedness; nor deem thyself
Unhappy in the midst of happiness.

MED. Insult me: thou hast found a refuge here,
Whilst I, a poor forsaken exile, fly.

JAS. Thou brought'st it on thyself; blame none beside.

MED. What doing? marrying, and betraying thee?

JAS. Uttering unhallow'd curses on the lords.

MED. On me the curses of thy house are pour'd.

JAS. No more of this will I debate with thee.
But of my treasures if thou wilt accept
Aught for thyself, or for thy sons, to cheer
Your exile, tell me; with a liberal hand
I am disposed to give, and to my friends
Send symbols; their humanity will shew thee
All acts of courtesy: if thou refuse,
Thy wisdom will be question'd; let thy heart
Abate its rage; thou wilt fare better for it.

MED. I shall not use thy friends, nor will accept
Aught of thy treasures: give not me; the gifts
Of a bad man can bring no good with them.

JAS. I call the gods to witness, 'tis my wish
To be assistant to thee and thy sons
In all things; but my bounty likes thee not;
Thy fiery and indignant soul rejects
Thy friends; increase of misery must ensue.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Why get thee gone; too long thy ling'ring here,
Enamour'd as thou art of thy new bride:
Wed her: but, be the gods propitious to me,
I tell thee thou wilt dearly rue these nuptials.

STRO. 1. When with a wild impetuous sway,
The Loves come rushing on the breast,

Each virtuous thought is rent away,
 Each breath of fame suppress.
 But when, confess'd her gentle reign,
 Enchanting Venus deigns t' appear,
 Of all the pow'rs of heav'n most dear,
 She leads the Graces in her train.

Ne'er from thy golden bow, queen of soft joy,
 Steep'd in desire thy shafts 'gainst me employ !

ANTIS. 1. The noblest present of the skies,
 Be modest temperance mine :
 May no unruly passions rise,
 Nor pride and hate combine
 Their baleful venom wide to spread,
 And, kindling rage and jealous strife,
 Embitter all the joys of life,
 In vengeance for the injur'd bed,
 O Venus, prompt connubial peace t' approve,
 And quick to mark the faults of wand'ring love !

STRO. 2. O my lov'd country, never let me roam
 An outcast from my native home,
 Outcast from thee and from my friends ;
 Whilst Poverty my flight attends,
 Sorrow, and soul-consuming Pain,
 And all Misfortune's cruel train :
 No: e'er I see that day,
 To death, let me to death be made a prey.
 Exiled from all my soul holds dear !——
 Life hath no torture so severe.

ANTIS. 2. This not from others, not from fame we know ;
 Our eyes behold the present woe.
 To thee, with heaviest griefs oppress,
 Thy house, thy country yields not rest ;
 No friends their lenient aid impart
 To heal the anguish of thy heart.
 Unpitied may he die,
 Who to a friend assistance can deny ;
 Nor, to afflicted virtue kind,
 Unlocks the treasures of his mind !

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

- ÆG. Medea, hail ! When we salute our friends,
No terms of higher honour can we use.
- MED. Son of the wise Pandion, Ægeus, hail !
Whence to the walls of Corinth art thou come ?
- ÆG. Leaving the ancient oracle of Phœbus.
- MED. What led thee to the Prophet's central shrine ?
- ÆG. To ask the god how offspring may be rais'd.
- MED. Hast thou lived childless, tell me, to this age ?
- ÆG. Such is my fortune, I am childless yet.
- MED. Hast thou a wife, or lonely is thy state ?
- ÆG. Not lonely : mine is the connubial bed.
- MED. What answer to thy question gave the god ?
- ÆG. Words of dark import, passing human reach.
- MED. Am I allow'd to know the oracle ?
- ÆG. Most freely, for it needs deep-thoughted wisdom.
- MED. What were the words ? If I may hear them, tell me.
- ÆG. Loose not the vessel's forward-stretching foot,
- MED. E'er thou do what ? Or in what land arrive ?
- ÆG. E'er I revisit my paternal house.
- MED. What then imports thy voyage to this land ?
- ÆG. A king named Pittheus at Trœzene reigns.
- MED. The son of Pelops, famed for sanctity.
- ÆG. The oracle to him would I impart.
- MED. Deep is his wisdom, his experience great.
- ÆG. Of all my friends in arms the dearest to me.
- MED. May'st thou be bless'd in all thy soul can wish !
- ÆG. But why these tears ? Why fades thy roseate hue ?
- MED. Ægeus, my husband is the worst of men.
- ÆG. What say'st thou ? Tell me what afflicts thy soul.
- MED. I never gave him cause, yet Jason wrongs me.
- ÆG. What hath he done ? Nay, tell me all thy griefs.
- MED. He weds another, one that here commands.
- ÆG. And hath he dared that most flagitious deed ?
- MED. E'en so, and treats his former friends with scorn.
- ÆG. Induced by love, or hatred of thy bed ?
- MED. By raging love, and light inconstancy.
- ÆG. Mischance go with him, faithless as he is.

- MED. Th' alliance of the king, that charm'd his mind.
ÆG. Who gave the bride? Inform me of the whole.
MED. Creon, the lord of this Corinthian state.
ÆG. Then, lady, thou hast cause indeed to grieve.
MED. Nay, further, I am driven an exile hence.
ÆG. By whom? This adds new weight to thy distress.
MED. By Creon driven an outcast from this land.
ÆG. Doth Jason suffer it? I like not this.
MED. His words gainsay it, but in fact his wish
Is adverse to my cause. But by this beard
I beg thee, suppliant at thy knees I beg,
Pity me, pity a most wretched woman,
Nor see me thus abandon'd, fallen thus low;
Receive me in thy country, in thy house,
There give me refuge; so may thy desire
Of children be accomplish'd by the gods,
And thou die bless'd! Thou know'st not what of good
Thou here hast found. Childless thou shalt not be,
From that grief I will free thee; I will give thee
To raise a race; such potent charms I know. ✕
ÆG. This grace for many causes I am prompt
To shew thee, lady: reverence to the gods
First moves me, and the hope of progeny,
Which thou hast promis'd; expectation else
Sinks in despair: effectual by thy arts!
Come to my country; there will I receive thee,
As justice gives in charge, right hospitably.
Yet one thing must I mention; from this realm
I should be much averse to lead thee with me;
Come of thyself, my house shall give thee welcome,
Thou shalt remain secure from violence,
And never, I will never send thee thence:
Quit of thyself this land; I would not give
Those, who receive me here, cause of offence.
MED. It shall be so: but let thy faith be given,
And thou in all things hast dealt nobly with me
ÆG. Dost thou distrust me? What new doubts arise?
MED. Thee I distrust not; but the hostile house

Of Pelias hates me, Creon hates me too ;
 Bound by thine oaths, to these thou wou'dst not yield me,
 Should they attempt to drag me from thy realms.
 Give me thy solemn promise, and adjure
 The gods ; and thou wilt be indeed my friend ;
 Nor will their heralds move thee : poor my state,
 And weak ; but wealth and regal pow'r is theirs.

ÆG. There is much prudence, lady, in thy words.

Is it thy wish I do this ? To refuse
 Be far from me : and thus too I shall act
 With greater safety, to thine enemies
 Urging this plea ; and thy protection hence
 More strongly be secured ; propose the oath.

MED. Swear by the Earth, and by my father's father
 The Sun, and every god that rules on high.

ÆG. That I will do, or will not do—say what.

MED. That thou wilt never cast me from thy state
 By thine own act ; nor, should my foes demand me,
 Whilst thou hast life consent to give me up.

ÆG. I swear then by the Earth, by you bright Sun,
 And all the gods, observance to thy words.

MED. Enough : but shou'dst thou violate thine oath——

ÆG. Mine be each ill that impious man awaits.

MED. Go then, and blessings go with thee along :
 Soon shall I reach thy city, having done
 What I propose, and what I wish obtain'd.

CHOR. And may the royal guide, the son of Maia,
 Conduct thee safely, Ægeus ; may success
 Attend thy hopes, and crown each anxious wish,
 For generous and right noble is thy soul.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Great Jove, thou righteous Vengeance of great Jove,
 And thou bright orb of day ! Now shall I find,
 My friends, a glorious conquest o'er my foes :
 This leads to conquest, and my hopes rise high
 That chastisement awaits them : for this man,
 Where most the danger threaten'd, shews the port

Of all my counsels; here then will I fix
My anchor'd bark, and to the royal town
Of Pallas bend my steps. Now will I tell thee
All my designs: but look not for soft words
To pleasure tuned. Of my attendant train
One will I send to Jason, and entreat
Once more to see him here; my words shall then
Be gentle to him, that I much approve
His actions; that I see what honour waits
His royal nuptials, which he now prepares
Betraying me, their high advantage own,
And say that all is honourably done.
I will entreat him that my sons may stay,
Not in this hostile land that I would leave them
Expos'd to th' insults of mine enemies,
But that this daughter of the king may feel me,
And perish by my arts; for I will send them
To this new bride with presents in their hands,
To win them leave to stay not exiled hence;
A fine-wrought robe, a gold-entwined wreath
To bind her tresses: in these ornaments
If she array her, instant shall she perish,
And all that touch her; with such potent spells
These presents will I charm. But what a deed,
Aye, there my heart is anguish'd, what a deed
Must next be done! My sons—I'll kill them both,
And who shall save them from me? All the house
Of Jason sunk in ruins, from this land,
Flying the slaughter of my dearest sons,
My soul wrought up to this unhallowed deed,
I go. To be derided by my foes,
It is not to be borne: go to: hath life
A blessing yet for me? I have no country,
I have no house, no refuge from my ills.
There was my weakness, when my father's house
I left, persuaded by the soothing words
Of this false Grecian, who, with the just gods,
Shall feel my vengeance: he no more shall see

His sons by me alive, nor shall he raise
 By this new-wedded wife another race:
 The wretch shall perish, by my potent charm
 Wretchedly perish. Let me not be deem'd
 A poor, low-thoughted, tame, and timid thing:
 No; to my foes relentless is my soul,
 But to my friends all gentleness; and such
 Are held through life in honour's highest rank.

CHOR. Thy purpose since to us thou hast disclosed,
 Studious of good to thee, and to assist
 The laws, I must dissuade thee from this deed.

MED. My soul is fix'd: yet I forgive thy words;
 Thou hast not felt the anguish which I feel.

CHOR. Can then a mother bear to slay her sons?

MED. So shall I work my husband greatest grief.

CHOR. And be thyself most wretched of thy sex.

MED. So let me be: but intervening words
 Are lost upon me. Go thou then, with speed
 Bring Jason hither; thy tried faith I use
 In all things: but take heed, speak not a word
 Of my designs, if with a friendly mind
 Thou wish thy mistress well, and art a woman.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Lo, where the blest Cecropian race,
 Through many a rolling age renown'd,
 Who from the gods their lineage trace,
 And their unconquer'd sacred ground,
 Nurtur'd in wisdom's noblest lore,
 The purest air delighted breathe
 The clearest skies beneath,
 Where, as they say, in times of yore
 The Muses from Pieria's chaste retreat
 Planted their lov'd Harmonia's golden seat.

ANTIS. 1. And where Cephisus through the vale
 Labours his beauteous-winding way,
 As Venus drew the freshing gale,
 She bade the gladsome Zephyrs play,

And wave their light wings o'er the land;
 Then, as the roseate wreath she twin'd
 Her fragrant locks to bind,
 She sent her sons, a decent band,
 Near Wisdom's hallow'd seat to hold their place,
 And breathe on Virtue their divinest grace.

STRO. 2. How shall these sacred streams, this state,
 This town, though prompt when Friendship calls
 To ope each hospitable gate,
 Thee in its bow'rs, its glades, its walls
 Receive, from this unhallow'd deed
 Polluted with thy children's gore?
 Ah, spare them, we implore,
 Let not their guiltless bosoms bleed!
 Behold us prostrate at thy feet, forbear,
 Thy sons, let friendship plead and pity, spare!

ANTIS. 2. What rashness, fired with frenetic rage
 Urg'd to these thoughts accurs'd thy mind?
 How would thy daring hands engage
 To do the deed thy soul design'd?
 The children by the mother slain!—
 Cou'dst thou with tearless eyes behold
 In blood thy offspring roll'd?
 Or can thy ruthless heart sustain
 To see thy kneeling sons for mercy sue,
 Yet in their blood thy horrid hands imbrue.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. I come at thy request; for though thy thoughts
 Breathe anger, I would not be wanting to thee,
 But hear whate'er of new be now thy wish.

MED. What hath been said amiss, I much entreat thee,
 Forgive me, Jason: right it is that thou
 Bear with my passion for the many acts
 Of our past love: calm reason hath resum'd
 Its station in my heart, much have I blamed
 And chid myself, Why, wayward as thou art,
 Thus have I school'd me, why wilt thou give way

To madness? Why this anger? All their thoughts
Are good to me and friendly: I have made
The monarch of this land mine enemy,
My husband too, who works my greatest good
Wedding this royal dame, that to my sons
He may raise brothers. Check thy passion then:
The gods thus kind, hast thou a cause of grief?
Hast thou not sons? I know that we have fled
Our country, and are destitute of friends.
Thus reasoning I was sensible of much
Imprudence, angry thus without a cause.
Now I approve thee, now thy conduct deem
Of prudent forecast, forming this alliance
For us: I was a fool: I should have shared
Thy counsels, have assisted them, have deck'd
Thy bed, rejoicing that thy royal bride
Regarded thee thus fondly. But we women
Are—what we are: I would not of my sex
Speak ill. But be not thou, like me, perverse,
Nor folly quit with folly. I submit,
And own the error of my judgment then,
But better counsels since have taken place.
My sons, come forth, come from the house, my sons,
Come forth; embrace your father, and with me
Address him, with your mother share his favour
No longer angry with his friends, for we
Are reconciled, and all our quarrels end
In pleasing concord: take him by the hand.——
Ah me! the thought of some concealed ill
Comes o'er my heart. Will you, my sons, live long
To stretch your dear hands thus? Unhappy me,
These eyes have lately learnt to weep, this heart
To know what fear is; time hath soften'd me.
My anger 'gainst your father is appeased,
And tenderness hath fill'd mine eyes with tears.

CHOR. From my eyes gushes also the warm tear.

O may no evil worse than this arise!

JAS. This I approve, nor blame thee for the past.

No wonder that a woman brooks it ill,
For other nuptials when, by interest led,
Her husband barter her. But now thy heart
Is calm'd to better counsels; time hath led
Reason in triumph to her seat: this shews thee
A woman truly wise. For you, my sons,
Your father, not improvident, hath form'd
The best of measures, with the favouring gods.
The state of Corinth shall, I trust, behold
You, with your future brothers, eminent
In rank and glory; fair advance your growth:
The rest your father, with whatever god
Is kind and friendly to us, will effect.
O may I see you blooming in the prime
Of manhood, and to every virtue train'd
Superior to my foes!——But why is this?
Why stands the moist tear trembling in thine eye?
Why is thy pale cheek turned aside, as if
Thou didst receive my words unwillingly?

MED. Nothing. I was but thinking of my sons.

JAS. Be cheer'd: their welfare is my dearest care.

MED. I will be cheer'd, and trust thee: yet I am
A woman, and by nature prone to tears.

JAS. Why with excess of grief mourn o'er thy sons?

MED. I am their mother: when thy wish was breath'd
That they might live, a piteous thought arose,
If that might be. But why I sent to ask
Thy presence here in part hath been explain'd,
The rest I now will tell thee: Since the lords
Are bent to drive me from this land, for me
I judge it best, not to dwell here, a check,
A curb on thee, and on thy royal friends;
For I am thought an enemy to their house:
Well then, far distant from this land I fly;
But that my sons may by thy hand be train'd,
Entreat the king they be not exiled hence.

JAS. With what success I know not, I will move him.

MED. Nay rather move thy bride, that she entreat

Her father not to drive my children hence.

JAS. Most readily: and, be she not unlike
Her gentle sex, I shall prevail with her.

MED. In this I will assist thee; I will send her
Presents, whose beauteous lustre far outshines
Whate'er of radiance human eyes have seen;
A fine-wrought robe, a gold-entwined crown
My sons shall bear. Of my attendant train
Go one, and quickly bring these ornaments.
Not in one instance shall thy bride be bless'd,
But in a thousand: her connubial bed
Graced with a husband of such excellence,
And she adorn'd with those resplendent honours,
Which once the Sun, my father's father, gave
To his descendants. Take them in your hands,
My sons, and as a nuptial present bear them
To the blest bride, the daughter of the king;
A present not to be despised, I ween.

JAS. Why wilt thou simply rob thyself of these?
Think'st thou the royal house in want of vests,
In want of gold? Nay, keep them, give them not:
If me she deigns to value, she will hold
My words of higher worth than richest gifts.

MED. Dissuade me not, for presents with the gods
Have pow'r; and no persuasive words can charm
The hearts of men, like gold. Fortune is hers,
And makes her absolute; this youthful queen
Here governs all: to win my children's stay,
My gold, nay e'en my life would I resign.
Go then, my sons, the royal house is nigh,
Entreat, beseech your father's new-won wife,
My mistress, that you may not from this land
Be forced to fly, present these ornaments;
And mark me, give them to no hands but hers.
Haste then; success attend you, and return
With the glad news to cheer your mother's heart,
The ardent wishes of her soul obtain'd.

STRO. 1. Hope that thy sons shall live is now

No more, e'en now to death they go.
This gorgeous prize
Shall she receive with pride;
But ruin to th' unhappy bride
In its refulgent circle lies,
Soon as her hands this crown shall place
Her golden-tressed brows to grace,
She goes, array'd for death,
To the dark shades beneath.

ANTIS. 1. The glittering robe's ambrosial ray
Its tempting lustre shall display;
Her tresses bright
Bound with this radiant gold,
Her nuptial pomp the bride shall hold
Solemniz'd in the realms of night.
Entangled in this net of fate
Misery and ruin on her wait;
Nor hath she pow'r to fly
Her ruthless destiny.

STRO. 2. Where, hapless husband, are the joys
That crown thy nuptial state?
Thy wish to kings to be allied,
Blind as thou art to fate,
With dreadful deeds thy sons destroys;-
And down the dreary road
To Pluto's dark abode
Conducts thy sorrow-wedded bride.

ANTIS. 2. Nor less for thee, unhappy dame,
My heart with pity bleeds:
By thee in gore thy sons shall roll,
Whilst prompt to horrid deeds,
Vindictive of th' unhallow'd flame
Which to a foreign bed
Thy perjured husband led,
Wild passions swell thy stormy soul.

TUTOR, MEDEA, CHORUS.

TUT. The sentence, lady, is revers'd, which doom'd

Thy sons to banishment. The royal bride
 Receiv'd thy presents with a willing mind;
 Hence to thy sons all here is peace.

MED.

Alas!

TUT. Why thus disturb'd, since fortune to thy wish
 Is kind? Why is thy pale cheek turn'd aside,
 As thou receiv'dst my words unwillingly?

MED. Alas, alas!

TUT. This to the tidings brought
 Is ill attuned.

MED. Yet heaves a deeper sigh.

TUT. Have I unwittingly come fraught with ill?
 I hoped t' have told thee what would give thee joy.

MED. What thou hast told, thou hast told: I blame not thee.

TUT. Why downward bends thine eye? Why starts that tear?

MED. There is a strong necessity, old man;
 The gods, and my ill counsels call for this.

TUT. Be cheer'd: thy interest through thy sons yet lives.

MED. First will I send them—O unhappy me!

TUT. Not thou alone art of thy sons bereft:
 As mortal, thy afflictions meekly bear.

MED. I shall: but go thou in, and for my sons
 Make ready what th' occasions of the day
 Require.—My sons, my sons, you have a city,
 You have a house, in which, forsaking me,
 O wretched me! you shall for ever dwell
 Rest of your mother: to another land
 I go a fugitive, delight in you
 E'er I enjoy, e'er I behold you blest,
 E'er I prepare you wives, e'er I adorn
 Your bridal bed, and hold the nuptial torch.
 Such the effects my headlong passions work!
 In vain I nurtured you, my sons; in vain
 I labour'd, and consumed myself with cares;
 In vain I bore a mother's painful throes.
 There was a time when I had many hopes,
 Wretch as I am, in you; that your fond love
 With nursing diligence would tend my age,

And decently in death compose my limbs,
The wish of mortals: now that pleasing thought
Is vanish'd; and my life, deprived of you,
Must wear away in misery and woe.
Your mother never with your longing eyes
Shall you view more; another state of life
Is yours. Alas, alas, why are your eyes,
My sons, fix'd fondly on me? Why that smile?
'Tis your last smile.—Ah me, what shall I do?
My heart sinks in me. When I see my sons,
Ye females, when I view their cheerful looks,
I cannot—No: ye former purposes,
Farewell! My children will I lead with me,
Flying this country. What avails to grieve
Their father with their ills, when my own heart
Must feel an heavier wound? I will not do it.
Farewell, my purpose.—Why this tenderness?
Can I then wish to be their jest, their scorn,
Leaving my foes unpunish'd? I must dare
The deed. These thoughts of gentleness arose
From coward weakness: go, my sons, go in:
Who to be present at my sacrifice
Deems it unholy, let him look to it.——
I will not slack my hand.—Ah me, ah me!
Do not, my soul, do not attempt this deed:
No, wretch; forbear to touch them; spare thy sons;
There shall they live with me, and be thy joy.——
Now by the pow'rs of vengeance in the realms
Beneath, this shall not be; I will not leave
My sons exposed to the malignant pride
And insults of my foes: since they must die
(For die they must) by me, who gave them life,
Death shall be given: this is my fix'd resolve,
Incapable of change. The royal bride
Wears on her head the crown, and in the vest
Is perishing: of this I am assured.
A very dismal way I now must tread;
But will send these a yet more dismal way.

Yet let me speak to them : Give me, my sons,
Give me your hands; embrace me: O that hand,
How dear to me, how very dear those lips,
That form, that noble aspect of my sons !
Bless'd may you be; but there; your father here
Hath reft each blessing. O the sweet embrace !
How soft their touch, how fragrant is their breath !
Go, go, my sons; I can no longer bear
To look on you, but sink o'erpower'd with ills.
I know, I feel the ills, my soul now dares;
But rage, which lords it o'er my breast, gives birth
To all the dreadful ills that chasten man.

CHOR. Through many an argument profound,
With studious care and thought refin'd,
Oft have I ponder'd in my mind,
If female minds may be allow'd
The depths of truth to sound.
Yet doth the Muse indulgent deign
Oft with our female bands to stay,
Our souls to Wisdom's lore to train :
Yet not with all: her hallow'd lay
To the dull ear in vain had flow'd;
And few of all our sex, a favour'd few
Thy searching eye perchance shall view
Touch'd with the mental strain.
This truth to all will I declare,
The free, th' unwedded, those that claim
No title to a father's name,
Uncumber'd with that care,
The paths of life with purer pleasure trace,
Than those that own a numerous race,
Their inexperience yet untaught,
Who have no child, if children give
Delight or anguish to the soul,
Grants them exempt from toils to live,
Exempt from those anxieties of thought
Which in the parent's bosom roll.
But those, who in their house survey

The lovely branches blooming round,
 Through all their lives to cares a prey,
 Feel their hearts bleed with many a wound.
 Anxious to form their op'ning mind,
 To train their youth to Virtue's lore;
 Anxious to pile the treasured store
 To grace their sons, when they shall go
 To the dark realms below,
 And oft this anxious thought will rise,
 If Virtue's pure and holy flame
 Shall light them through the paths of honest fame;
 Or all their cares and all their toils
 To vice and folly be made spoils:
 Th' event in darkness lies.
 One ill, one bitter source of woes,
 The last, the worst, must I disclose;
 When high the glittering piles are plac'd,
 When manhood holds its vigorous state,
 Their breasts with every virtue grac'd,
 If such th' imperious will of fate,
 Comes Death, and sweeps them to the shades of night
 From the fond father's sight.
 To black Misfortune's other train
 Why add the gods this sharpest pain,
 On the lost son's untimely bier
 With anguish'd souls to drop the tear?

MEDEA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

- MED. With eager expectation I await
 Th' event, my friends, from thence. But I behold
 One of the train of Jason; on he comes
 With breathless haste; he looks as he would tell
 A tale of some misfortune recent there.
 MESS. O, thou hast done an execrable deed:
 Fly then, Medea, fly: instantly mount
 The winged galley, or the rapid car.
 MED. What weighty cause requires this instant flight?
 MESS. E'en now the daughter of the king is dead,

And Creon, by thy potent charms destroy'd.

MED. These are most glorious tidings; I will hold thee
Hereafter 'mongst my best and kindest friends.

MESS. What say'st thou? Hast thy mind its perfect sense,
Or is this madness? On the royal house
By thee destruction falls: canst thou with joy
Welcome the tidings, unimpress'd with fear?

MED. I could say much to this; but let it pass.
Nay, haste not hence, but tell me how they perish'd:
If wretchedly, thou giv'st me double joy.

MESS. When with their father to the bridal house
Thy sons were come, we servants, who before
Felt in thy ill's a sorrow, much rejoiced.
For soon the grateful news was spread, that now
The former enmity was ceas'd betwixt
Thee and thy husband: we caress'd thy sons;
One kiss'd their hand, and one their blooming cheek.
Me to th' apartment of the females joy
Led with them: there our mistress, whom we now
Must reverence in thy stead, e'er she beheld
Thy sons, on Jason roll'd her cheerful eyes,
But hid them soon and turn'd her cheek aside
Pale, and disgusted at thy sons' approach;
Thy husband sooth'd her, and with gentle words
Besought her not unkindly to receive
Those whom he loved, to let anger cease,
To turn her face, and deem her husband's friends
As friends to her; he begg'd her to receive
Thy presents, and for his sake to entreat
Her father not to drive his sons to exile.
She, when she saw the gorgeous ornaments,
Could not refuse, but promis'd all he ask'd.
And e'er her husband and thy sons were gone
Far from the house, the various-tinctur'd robe
She took, and put it on; then on her head
She placed the golden crown, and with nice care
Composed her tresses at the radiant mirror,
And smiled upon the lifeless image there;

Then rising from her seat with dainty step
 Travers'd the chamber, with the splendid gifts
 Delighted, and full oft with head erect
 Cast on the mirror her admiring eyes.
 A sight of horror follow'd; from her cheeks
 The roses fled, her trembling limbs with pain
 Support her staggering steps to reach her seat
 E'er on the floor she sunk. An aged dame,
 One of th' attendant train, who thought that Pan
 Came in his anger, or some other god,
 Awoke the solemn supplicating strain:
 But when she saw the white foam from her mouth
 Burst forth, her eye-balls starting from her head,
 With wild distortion, and her roseate blood
 Sink colourless, she gave a shriek of woe,
 A sound far other than her former strain.
 One to th' apartments of the father rush'd,
 One to the lately-married husband: all
 Was wild confusion through the house: and now
 Impetuous in its course the fierce disease
 Had run its wild career. She, hapless she,
 Speechless before, and closed her stiffening eye,
 Heav'd a deep groan, and tried to raise herself
 Conflicting with a double pest: the gold
 Wreath'd round her head, astonishing to see,
 Emits a stream of all-devouring fire.
 The fine-wrought vest, presented by thy sons,
 Corrodes her flesh. She starting from her seat
 Flies all on fire, tosses her burning locks,
 This way and that way shakes her head, and strives
 To disengage the crown; the circling gold

1281. The ancients attributed all sudden terrors, and sudden sicknesses, such as epilepsies, for which no cause appeared, to Pan,

ἐντί γε πικρὸς,

Καί οἱ αἰὲν δριμύτηα χολὰ ποτὶ ῥινὶ κάθηται. *Theocrit. Idyl. i.*

or to some other deity: the iracunda Diana was esteemed one of these. This anger of the god they endeavoured to avert by an hymn, which had the nature of a charm.

Held its fix'd grasp; and when she toss'd her head,
The whirling fire with two-fold fury blaz'd;
Till vanquish'd by her sufferings on the floor
She falls, but so unlike what once she was,
Scarcely could the father's eye his daughter own.
No more the liquid lustre of those eyes,
Those blooming cheeks no more retain'd their grace;
But from her head blood mix'd with fire flow'd down,
And, like the tear that dewes the pine, her flesh,
Melted in putrid drops, consumed beneath
The rankling venom: dreadful sight! all fear'd
To touch the body, by her sufferings warn'd.
Th' unhappy father, ignorant of all
Her miserable state, with hasty step
Entering the chamber, with a piteous cry
Fell on the body, clasp'd it in his arms,
Kiss'd it, and thus address'd it, O my child,
O my unhappy child, what cruel god
Hath thus destroy'd thee? Who my feeble age
Hath bow'd, deprived of thee, down to the tomb?
Alas, my daughter, I would die with thee!
Then, pausing from his sad laments, he tried
To raise his aged body, but was held,
Like ivy round the laurel's branches twined,
Held by the fine-wrought robe: his strugglings now
Were dreadful; on his knees he strove to rise,
That drew him back; if he essay'd his strength
With greater efforts, from his bones it rent
His aged flesh; till faint and motionless
He lay, and breath'd out his unhappy life,
Worn out and wasted with his ills. In death
They lie, the daughter and the hoary father
Together stretch'd, a sight that calls for tears.
Now thou hast heard my tale, fly hence, be gone,
Or vengeance, be assured, will on thy head
Recoil. I have not now first learn'd that all
Th' affairs of mortal men are a mere shadow:
Nor would I fear to say, that those, who most

Boast of their wisdom and their deep research,
The widest in the paths of folly stray.
No mortal man is happy : if the tide
Of wealth flows in upon him, one may be
More fortunate than others, happy never.

CHOR. The gods on Jason will this day inflict
Variety of ills, with justice all.
But thee, unhappy daughter of the king,
Thee we lament, and thy calamities.
From Jason far, far from thy bridal bed
To Pluto's dreary mansions art thou gone.

MED. This deed, my friends, is fix'd, to slay my sons
With quickest speed, then hasten from this land;
Nor fondly lingering leave them to be slain
By some more hostile hand : since they must die
(For die they must) by me, who gave them life,
Death shall be given : and thou, my heart, be arm'd :
Yield not to weak reluctance, nor delay
A dreadful, but a necessary deed.
Come, my unhappy hand, seize thou the sword,
Seize it, and wind thy progress to the goal
Of miserable life : faint not, nor think
Of thy poor children, O how dear to me !
For this short day remember not thy sons,
Hereafter mourn at leisure : though I kill them,
Yet were they dear, and I—a very wretch.

CHORUS.

STRO. O Earth, and thou who roll'st on high
Thy all-illuming flame,
Cast from thy radiant car thine eye,
And view this raging dame;
To slaughter e'er she gives the reins,
E'er in her children's gore her hands she stains :
For from thy golden line
Their splendid origin they draw;
And man with holy awe
Refrains from spilling blood divine;

Check, god of brightness, curb, control
This frenzy of her soul;

And far, whilst yet her children live,
Far from the bloody house this fell Erinnyes drive!

ANTIS. In vain to thee a mother's pain,

Thy cares, thy labours lost;

Thine is a mother's name in vain,

In vain this dearest boast;

O thou, whose dauntless heart could brave
The pass, where howls th' inhospitable wave,

Whose should'ring torrents roll

The dark-brow'd clashing rocks between!

Ah why, unhappy queen,

Why rends this ruthless rage thy soul?

No lavers cleanse the murd'rous hand

With kindred blood profan'd;

But soon his house in ruins lies,

As desolation marks the vengeance of the skies.

1st SON. What shall I do? How fly my mother's hands? [*within*.

2d SON. I know not; dearest brother, we shall die.

CHOR. Heard you the cry? Heard you the children's voice?

O thou unhappy, thou ill-fated woman!

Let me go in to them; I deem it right

To snatch the children from her murderous hands.

SON. Nay, by the gods, assist us, now, e'en now,

For we are nigh th' inevitable sword.

CHOR. Thou wretch, art thou of iron, or of rock,

That thou wilt kill thy sons, whom thou brought'st forth,

With thine own hands? The annals of past times

Record but one, one only furious dame,

Who plung'd her hands in her dear children's blood:

And heav'n-sent madness had o'erturn'd the sense

Of Ino, by the wife of Jove driven forth,

And wandering from her house; when she had slain

1410. The story of Ino is well known, from Ovid, *Met.* l. 4. related a little differently here.

Her sons, as o'er the sea-beat beach she roved,
She rush'd into the waves, and perish'd with them.
Remains there aught more horrible than this?
Thou female bed, fruitful of various ills,
What woes, what miseries hast thou caus'd to man !

JASON, CHORUS.

JAS. Ye female train, that near this mansion stand,
Say, is Medea in the house, who wrought
These deeds of horror, or withdrawn by flight?
But she must hide her deep beneath the earth,
Or rise on light wings through th' ethereal height,
Or vengeance for the royal house will fall
With fury on her. Doth her pride presume
That, having slain the monarchs of this land,
Her flight shall be secure from chastisement?
But less for her, than for my sons, my care;
Revenge from those, whom she hath wrong'd, shall fall
On her : I come to save my children's lives;
Lest on their heads the kindred of the king
Punish their impious mother's murderous deed.

CHOR. Thou know'st not, wretched Jason, to what height
Thy ills are risen, or this thou hadst not said.

JAS. What, does her purpose reach to kill me too?

CHOR. Thy sons are dead beneath their mother's hands.

JAS. Ah me ! what say'st thou ? Thou hast pierc'd my heart.

CHOR. Think of thy sons as living now no more.

JAS. Where kill'd she them ! abroad, or in the house?

CHOR. Open the door, and thou wilt see them slain.

JAS. Instant, ye menial train, unbar the door,
Give me admittance, that I may behold
This aggravated ill, my children slain,
And drag her to deserved punishment.

MED. Why with this tumult dost thou beat the door,
Seeking the dead, and me, who did the deed?
Forbear this uproar. Wou'dst thou aught with me ?
Speak it : but never shalt thou touch me more :

The Sun, my father, gives me such a car,
A safe protection from each hostile hand.

- JAS. O thou detested woman, most abhorred
By the just gods, by me, and all mankind,
In thine own children, who cou'dst plunge the sword,
Their mother thou, to reave me of my sons;
And having done this deed, dost yet behold
The sun, the earth, this deed of horror done!
Perdition seize thee: now I know thee: then
I knew thee not, when from thy home I led thee,
Led thee to Greece from a barbaric shore,
Pernicious monster, to thy father false,
And trait'ress to the land that nurtured thee,
And now the vengeful Furies on my head
Punish thy crimes; for with thy brother's blood
Distain'd the gallant Argo didst thou mount:
This was a prelude to thy ruthless deeds.
Wedded by me, a mother too by me,
Thy children hast thou murder'd, in revenge
For my new bed: an act no dame of Greece
Would ever dare attempt; yet I preferr'd thee
To all their softer charms, and wedded thee,
Alliance hateful and destructive to me,
A tygress, not a woman, of a soul
More wild, more savage than the Tuscan Scylla.
But millions of reproaches would not gall
That hard unfeeling heart. Then get thee gone,
Achiever of base mischiefs, blood-stain'd pest,
Stain'd with thy children's blood, be gone and perish.
For me remains to wail my hopeless state;
For from my nuptials never shall I taste
The promis'd joy, nor see my sons alive,
Dear objects of my care, for ever lost.
- MED. Full answer to thy words could I return,
Recounting each past circumstance; but Jove,

1447. The Scholiast observes here, that Medea appears above in a chariot drawn by dragons, bearing with her the bodies of her slaughtered sons. *Serpente fugit alite.*

Th' almighty father, knows what grace I shower'd
On thee, and what requital thou hast made.

Thou shalt not pass thy wanton life in joys,
My bed dishonour'd, and make villainous jests
At my disgrace; nor shall thy royal bride,
Nor the proud Creon who betroth'd her, dare
To chase me from this country, unchastis'd.

Call me a tygress then, or, if thou wilt,
A Scylla howling 'gainst the Tuscan shore,
I, as is right, have taught thy heart to bleed.

JAS. Thy heart too bleeds, a sharer in these ills.

MED. Be thou assured of that: yet in my griefs
I joy, thou canst not make a mock at them.

JAS. My children, a bad mother have you found.

MED. My sons, you perish'd through your father's folly.

JAS. Yet my right hand plung'd not the murderous sword.

MED. But thy foul wrongs, and thy new nuptials plung'd it.

JAS. And for these nuptials hast thou kill'd thy sons?

MED. This to a woman deem'st thou a slight pain?

JAS. To one discreet: but all is ill to thee.

MED. These are no more; and that shall rend thy heart.

JAS. Their shades shall pour their vengeance on thy head.

MED. The just gods know which first began these ills.

JAS. And the gods know thy execrable heart.

MED. Thou and thy bitter speech are hateful to me.

JAS. And thine to me: this soon may have an end.

MED. How? for I wish to free me from thy sight.

JAS. Give me my sons, to mourn and bury them.

MED. Never; for on the height where Juno's shrine
Hallows the ground, this hand shall bury them,
That hostile rage may not insult their ashes,
And rend them from the tomb: a solemn feast
And sacrifice hereafter to this land
Will I appoint to expiate this deed
Of horrid murder. In the friendly land
Where once Erectheus reign'd, the house of Ægeus,
Pandion's son, is open to receive me;
Thither I go. But thou, as thy vile deeds

Deserve, shalt vilely perish, thy base head
Crush'd with the mouldering relics of thy Argo,
And of my nuptials feel that wretched end.

JAS. Thee may th' Erinnyes of thy sons destroy,
And Justice, which for blood vindictive calls
For blood.

MED. What god will hear thee, or what fury,
Thou perjur'd base betrayer of the rights
Of hospitality?

JAS. Away, away,
Thou pest abhorr'd, thou murderer of thy sons.

MED. Go to thy house, go and entomb thy wife.

JAS. I go deprived, alas, of both my sons.

MED. This grief be thine, e'en to thy latest age.

JAS. O my dear sons!

MED. Aye, to their mother dear,
But not to thee.

JAS. And therefore didst thou kill them?

MED. To rend thy heart.

JAS. Ah me, ah wretched me!
I long to kiss the dear cheeks of my sons.

MED. Thou wou'dst address them now, embrace them now,
Then thou cou'dst chase them from thee.

JAS. By the gods,
Give me to touch their soft and delicate flesh.

MED. Never: thy words are thrown away in vain.

JAS. Hear'st thou this, Jove, with what indignant pride
I am rejected, with what insults wrong'd
By this abhorr'd, this child-destroying tygress!
Yet, what I may, what pow'r is left me yet,
I will lament them, will sit down and wail,
And call to witness the avenging gods,
That, having slain my sons, thou hast denied me
To touch the dead, and lay them in the tomb.
O that I never, never had begot them,
To see them thus, thus murder'd by thy hands!

CHOR. Jove in high heav'n dispenses various fates:
And now the gods show'r blessings, which our hopes

Dared not aspire to, now control the ills
We deem'd inevitable: thus the god
To these hath giv'n an end we never thought:
Such is the dreadful fortune of this day.

HIPPOLYTUS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

VENUS

HIPPOLYTUS

ATTENDANTS

PHÆDRA

NURSE

THESEUS

MESSENGER

DIANA

CHORUS OF TRÆZENIAN DAMES.

HIPPOLYTUS.

THESEUS, when he attended Hercules in his expedition against the Amazons, became enamoured of the beauteous Hippolyta, who yielded not to his love till he had vanquished her in single combat ; this was a dangerous and difficult labour even for Theseus : she then accompanied him to Athens, and bore him a son named from her Hippolytus. This young prince, educated by the philosophic Pittheus, was generous as his father, and chaste as his mother ; he excelled in every manly exercise, and was adorned with every virtue : yet there was one imperfection in his character, which was the fatal cause of his unhappy destruction ; benevolent and courteous to all mankind, but averse to the female sex, and a stranger to the tender passion of love, though he paid a religious regard to the gods, yet, devoting himself chiefly to Diana, he not only neglected Venus, but treated her temples and her worship with disrespect : this drew upon him the indignation of that goddess, which could not be appeased but by his ruin. The poet intended this as a monition to his countrymen not to neglect any religious worship, but to pay a religious reverence to all the gods : thus he makes Venus say,

Those, who with reverence own my pow'r, I grace
With honour ; but chastise the hostile pride
That vaunts itself against me : for a sense
Of pleasure touches e'en the heav'nly race,
When mortals pay them homage.

Hippolyta dying, Theseus married Phædra, the daughter of Minos, king of Crete. At the first sight of the young and accomplished Hippolytus, this unfortunate princess felt the passion of love in its full force: conscious of its indecency, feelingly alive to a sense of honour, and careful of her fame, she concealed, she struggled with her guilty passion, she called in her reason and her virtue to her aid, and when she found that she was unable to subdue it, she determined to die: thus far she may be considered as unfortunate, but not guilty, as she was influenced by the irresistible power of Venus, who inspired this love to effect the ruin of the hated Hippolytus. At length her Nurse, a character highly respected by the ancients, extorted the guilty secret from her, and revealed it to Hippolytus without her knowledge, and contrary to her positive command: the consequence was such as might be expected from this chaste and virtuous youth, who expressed his abhorrence of the declaration with no small degree of asperity. The unhappy Phædra, betrayed and disgraced, resolved upon an immediate death, but with a menace against the innocent cause of her misery; she dies with a letter fastened to her hand, in which she accuses Hippolytus to his father of having violated his bed by force. This is the fatal progress of a guilty passion in a mind naturally generous, sensible to virtue, and impatient of shame; not without some touch of resentment, to be expected from a woman whose love had been rejected with disdain. Her accusation of Hippolytus arose first from the disappointment of her intention to die with glory, and an apprehension that her shame would be divulged: there is something generous in her regard to reputation, her care for the honour of her children, and her determination not to

disgrace her high-traced ancestry ; but the menace with which she quits the scene, and which she immediately puts in execution, shews that the thought of vice, if not instantly suppressed, gathers strength and fury, till it extinguishes every principle of virtue, and goes on to the most dangerous and fatal extremes.

The unfortunate Phædra, a character so finely touched by Euripides, who was compelled to love by the impulse of Venus, yet sensible to honour, shame, and virtue,

never told her love,

But let concealment, like a worm in the bud,

Feed on her damask cheek ;

who, having dropped an unguarded expression which she thought disclosed too much, was ashamed of what she had said, and commanded her face to be veiled to hide the blush glowing on her cheek ; who at last was prevailed upon to discover the cause of her malady, only that she might die with the glory of having sacrificed her life to extinguish a guilty flame, which she abhorred in herself ; who, when her officious and wicked attendant had, contrary to her injunction, betrayed the fatal secret to Hippolytus, and he came into her presence, unveiled not her face, nor uttered a word till he had departed ; then lamented her condition, severely reproved her base servant, and died to avoid the shame consequent on the discovery : this Phædra of Euripides has lost all this delicacy under the hands of Seneca, and is a shameless and abandoned woman, untouched with the feelings of female modesty, deaf to the remonstrances of her Nurse, though strongly urged, and determined to indulge her guilty passion through all its consequences ; nay she so far forgets her sex as herself to reveal her love to Hippolytus, and to urge her plea

with all the vehemence of ungoverned passion. The scene indeed is beautiful and striking, but nothing can atone for that total extinction of character; yet the soberest of critics, P. Brumoy, pronounces it to be very happily imagined; and Mr. Racine has sanctified it by his imitation: we may be sure that it would lose nothing of its beauty under his hands; indeed this excellent and chaste writer was sensible of the impropriety of character in the *Phædra* of Seneca, and in his own tragedy has been studious to preserve great delicacy and decorum, though he suffered himself to be misled by this splendid fault. Racine has a sublimity of conception, a dignity of expression, an impassioned sensibility, a purity of moral, and a religious attention to virtue, which entertain, and move, and instruct us, while we admire the poet, and approve the man; yet with all his powers he has failed in the two great characters of this play, and that necessarily from the change of religion and manners. The wretched theology of the ancients admitted this agency of Venus, and Euripides with great art availed himself of the popular belief; the appearance of this goddess was therefore not only proper, but necessary; hence *Phædra* is considered as an unhappy woman, compelled by an irresistible power to love, and to disclose her love, against all the struggles of reason, modesty, and virtue, which are finely described; she is therefore the object of pity: but this plea cannot now be urged, nor does any other succeed in its place; for the doctrine of fatality or destiny can amount to no more than

That when weak women go astray,
The stars are more in fault than they;

and this the chaste dignity of the tragic muse disdains

to admit : Phædra therefore on a modern stage must be a vicious character ; Racine was sensible of this, and has exerted all his skill to soften this culpability ; he has succeeded to admiration, yet this Phedre is not the Phædra of Euripides. With regard to the other great part, by representing Hippolytus in love, he has totally changed the character, and with it the whole plan and conduct of the Greek drama ; but though the amiable and gallant Hippolyte of Racine forms a very pleasing and very interesting character, yet we are sorry to lose the severe unyielding Hippolytus of Euripides ; yet the French poet knew how to adopt the excellencies of the Athenian, and his tragedy has great merit. Our countryman, Mr. Smith, closely imitated Racine, and met with as much applause as he deserved.

Brumoy has passed a censure on the Prologue to this drama, as anticipating most of the principal events ; and this, he says, is the perpetual fault of Euripides. This criticism has been echoed from every quarter. But the great poet knew perfectly well what he was about : the appearance of Venus was absolutely necessary, as hath been shewn ; and it was as necessary that she should declare her intention, that is, the principal events of the drama. These events were domestic facts, with which the audience were well acquainted : the poet's aim was not, like Bayes, to elevate and surprise by the novelty of his story, but to touch the heart by a known story, his management of which it was the province of the prologue to unfold ; *qui argumentum narrat*, as Terence says ; on which Donatus observes, *quod vere prologi est officium*. On this model Mr. Pope formed his Prologue to the tragedy of Cato, the most excellent and perfect that ever was pronounced on the English stage : this speaks of the

brave asserter of liberty as greatly falling with a falling state, and even mentions his dying groans; yet Mr. Addison approved, and a British audience applauded.

The Scene is at Trœzene, in the vestibule of the palace of Pittheus.

HIPPOLYTUS.

VENUS.

A GODDESS not inglorious in the skies
Is Venus, and 'mongst mortals great my pow'r,
Whether beyond the ocean they behold
The sun's bright beams, or o'er th' Atlantic bound.
Those, who with reverence own my pow'r, I grace
With honour; but chastise the hostile pride
That vaunts itself against me: for a sense
Of pleasure touches e'en the heav'nly race,
When mortals pay them homage. Of these words
Soon will I shew the truth: the son of Theseus,
Hippolytus, of Amazonian strain,
By the chaste Pittheus school'd, of all that dwell
Within Trœzene's walls, alone defies me
As the most worthless of the gods, and love
He holds in scorn, and the connubial bed.
But to Diana, sister of Apollo,
His vows, as to the greatest of the gods,
With honour are address'd; and still he haunts,
Consorting with the virgin, the green woods,
And from their coverts drives the beasts of chase
With his fleet dogs, aspiring far beyond
Human society. But this excites
No envy in my breast, I deem not this
A worthy cause; but for offences aim'd

12. Ægeus in his return from the oracle of Delphi, went to Trœzene to consult the wise and religious Pittheus, who gave him his daughter Æthra, the mother of Theseus. See Medea, l. 737.

Against my pow'r, Hippolytus this day
 Shall feel my vengeance. Slight will be my toil
 T' effect what long hath been prepar'd : for once,
 As from the house of Pittheus, to behold
 And celebrate the sacred mysteries,
 He came, at Athens the illustrious wife
 Of Theseus, Phædra, saw him, and her heart,
 Such was my will, felt the fierce flames of love :
 And, e'er she hither to Trœzene came,
 A temple there she rais'd to Venus, nigh
 The rock of Pallas which o'erlooks this land,
 Struck with an absent love; and future times
 Shall tell that for Hippolytus she rais'd
 The temple to the goddess. But when Theseus,
 The sons of Pallas slain, to expiate
 The stain of blood, left the Cecropian land,
 And with his wife steer'd to these realms his course,
 A voluntary exile for the space
 Of one revolving year, then did she sigh,
 And, though her heart felt all the pangs of love,
 Conceal'd her anguish, and in secret pin'd ;
 Nor one of her attendants knew the cause
 Of her disease. This love shall not be lost
 Without effect; to Theseus will I shew it;
 It shall be known; and this mine enemy
 By imprecations shall his father kill;
 For once the monarch of the main this grace
 To Theseus granted, that of three requests
 Presented to the god, not one should fall
 Void of its purpose. Of illustrious fame
 Is Phædra, yet together let her perish :
 I have not for her life that tenderness,

34. The very ingenious note of Valckenær on this passage deserves the attention of the learned reader.

39. Pallas was the brother of Ægeus : his sons for some factious attempt against the state of Athens was slain by Theseus. Pausanias confirms the authority of the Scholiast. A voluntary exile for a year, in which expiations were made, was the usual atonement for shedding kindred blood.

As not to pour such vengeance on my foes
 As shall be pleasing to me.—But I see
 This son of Theseus coming; from the chase
 Hippolytus returns; I will be gone;
 For with him comes a numerous train of youths,
 Who to Diana raise the noisy song.
 Full little thinks he that the gates of hell
 Are open'd, and he sees this sun no more.

HIPPOLYTUS, ATTENDANTS.

HIPP.

Follow, follow, follow me,
 To Diana raise the strain;
 Goddess of the chase is she,
 And admits us of her train.

ATT.

Virgin goddess of the chase
 Queen of every noble grace,
 Holy, awe-commanding pow'r,
 Whom to Jove Latona bore,
 Hail Diana, and again

Hail; thou most beauteous of the virgin train,
 That tread the wide-extended realms above
 Radiant, and grace the golden courts of Jove!

HIPP.

Hail, Diana, virgin bright,
 Fairest of the forms divine,
 That in heav'n's ethereal height
 Graced with beauty's radiance shine!

Thee, goddess, to adorn I bring this crown
 Enwoven with the various flow'rs that deck
 The unshorn mead, where never shepherd dared
 To feel his flock, and the scythe never came,
 But o'er its vernal sweets unshorn the bee
 Ranges at will, and modest nature rolls
 Th' irriguous streamlet, garish art hath there
 No share: of these the modest still may cull
 At pleasure, interdicted to th' impure.
 But for thy golden tresses, honour'd queen,
 Receive this garland from my pious hands.
 To me alone of mortals is this grace

Vouchsafed, to share thy company, to hold
 Free converse with thee, and to hear thy voice,
 Though not permitted to behold thy face.
 But let my life, as I begun it, end.

ATT. Say, royal youth, for we should call the gods
 Alone our lords, wilt thou hear counsel from me?

HIPP. Most willingly: I else should seem unwise.

ATT. Know'st thou the common law to man prescribed?

HIPP. I know not; nor thy question, what it means.

ATT. To hate whate'er of haughty scorns to please.

HIPP. And justly; for the haughty all must hate.

ATT. And is there in the affable a grace?

HIPP. Much, and with little labour to be won?

ATT. And thinkest thou this reaches to the gods?

HIPP. It must, since from the gods we have our laws.

ATT. Why then this haughty goddess not address?

HIPP. What goddess? But be cautious of offence.

ATT. Venus, that hath her station at thy gates.

HIPP. Her at a distance I, as chaste, salute.

ATT. Yet is she haughty, and 'mongst men renown'd.

HIPP. Each different gods reveres, and different men.

ATT. Werethy thoughts what they ought, thou wou'dst be blest.

HIPP. A god revered by night delights not me.

ATT. Sacred should be the honour of the gods.

HIPP. Go, my companions, pass this dome, prepare

Provisions; for the table richly spread

After the chase is grateful. I must see

My coursers dress'd, that after my repast

I well may breathe them harness'd to the car:

But to thy Venus here I bid farewell.

ATT. But we with better thought, (for from young men

We must not take example,) as becomes

Our humble station, to thy image pay

Our vows, imperial Venus: be it thine

To pardon him, if driv'n by headlong youth

He speaks imprudently: do thou appear

As if thou heard'st him not: it well becomes

The gods to be more wise than mortal men.

CHORUS.

- STRO. 1. There is a rock, from whose deep base
 The bubbling fountains flow ;
 And from the top we sink the vase
 To reach the stream below.
 I have a friend, who thither brought
 Her vests with radiant purple wrought,
 To bathe them in the crystal dew,
 Then on the rock's steep ridge display
 To the warm sun's ethereal ray
 Their richly-tinctur'd hues.
- ANTIS. 1. There first from her the tidings came
 That languishing away
 On her sick couch the royal dame
 In her apartments lay ;
 And, every eye avoiding, spread
 The light veil o'er her golden head.
 Three days from food, through pining grief,
 Have her ambrosial lips refrain'd ;
 And, with some secret anguish pain'd,
 From death she hopes relief.
- STRO. 2. Some god, unhappy queen, hath sent
 These tumults in thy breast
 By Pan's dismaying terrors rent,
 By Hecate possest,
 Or by the mighty Mother's pow'r
 Who raving roves the mountains o'er :
 Or sends the huntress queen this pain,
 Neglected in the solemn rites ?
 She roams along the lakes, the heights,
 And o'er the briny main.
- ANTIS. 2. Or is thy lord, th' Athenian chief,
 To vagrant pleasures led ?

136. This is not only a picture of ancient manners, such as Homer exhibits in Nausicaa ; but the mention of the purple robes denotes the dame to be of the royal house, which gives authenticity to the relation.

Dost thou for this indulge thy grief,
 And mourn thy injur'd bed?
 Or to Trœzene's friendly bay
 Hath a bark plough'd the wat'ry way,
 With tidings that afflict thy mind?
 From Crete some dismal accident
 May have my queen, her sad heart rent,
 To her sick couch confin'd.

EPOD.

Oft in the female heart, depress'd with fear,
 Mad melancholy loves to dwell,
 When the full months revolving tell
 That child-birth's painful hour draws near.
 These fears, the pains of old I bore;
 But then the heav'nly, arrow-loving maid
 Was it my wont t' implore;
 And prompt to give her lenient aid
 Diana came, and with her led
 The pow'rs that guard the nuptial bed.

But see, the aged Nurse before the doors
 Supports her from the house: a gloomy cloud
 Hangs thick'ning on her brow; what this may be
 I wish to know; and why, unhappy queen,
 The transient bloom is faded from her cheek.

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

NUR. Unhappy state of mortals, thus to waste
 With irksome sickness! What, to give thee ease,
 Shall I attempt? What shall I not attempt?
 Here may'st thou view the light of heav'n, here breathe
 Th' ethereal air; here press thy sickly couch
 Before the house; for often didst thou ask
 To be led hither; to thy chamber soon

163. Canter, Valckenaer, and Musgrave object to the word *πημαίνω*, v. 153; and receive *ποιμαίνω* in its room: this Barnes disapproves, and Carmeli thinks the present reading has a wonderful propriety: few will think with him, and fewer approve Canter's proposed emendation: Heath has left the place untouched: if the text wants correction, perhaps no word is more proper than *πημαίνω*. Vid. v. 223.

Wilt thou return; for changeful is thy mind,
And nothing pleases; what is present to thee
Delights thee not, expecting more of good
In what is absent. Sickness hath in this
Advantage o'er the arts that work its cure;
That is a simple ill; but these require
Attentive thought, and labour of the hands.
But all the life of man is full of pain,
And trouble knows no pause. If there be aught
Than life more precious, darkness hangs around
Concealing it in clouds: this present light
Ill claims our love, for that it gilds this earth,
And we know nothing of our future life,
Discover nothing of the realms below;
But in perplexing fables all is wrapt.

PHÆ. Yet bear me up, my friends, support my head,
I have no strength: you, that attend me, hold
My feeble hands. How cumb'rous is this dress!
Ill can my head support it; take it off,
And let these crisped tresses flow. Ah me!

NUR. Be cheer'd, my child; nor with this restless motion
Weary thy weak limbs; easier wilt thou bear
Thy sickness resting calmly, and thy mind
Arming with patience: in this mortal state
None are exempt from struggling with their ills.

PHÆ. O, from the limpid fountain might I draw
The cooling stream, and on the grassy bank
Reclined beneath the poplars rest my head!

NUR. What means that wish? Ah, speak not words like these
To many: there is something wild in them.

PHÆ. O bear me to the mountain; to the pines,
The forest would I go, where the fleet hounds
Pursue the dappled hinds! O, by the gods,
I long to cheer the dogs of chase, to wave
O'er my bright tresses the Thessalian dart,
And grasp the pointed javelin in my hands!

NUR. Whence this desire, this fondness for the chase?
Why from the limpid fountain wou'dst thou take

The cooling draught? Beside the citadel
 Headlong the gushing waters roll along
 The living stream : thence may'st thou slake thy thirst.

PHÆ. Diana, goddess of the sacred lake,
 And of th' equestrian courses, in thy field
 O how I long to tame th' Henetian steeds !

NUR. Why are thy words again thus wild? E'en now
 The mountain and the chase was all thy wish ;
 Now in the thirsty sands to tame the steed.
 Inexplicable this, but that some god
 Whirls to and fro thy wild disorder'd sense.

PHÆ. What have I done, unhappy as I am,
 And whither wander'd from my sober sense ?
 I raved : some angry god hath wrought this ill.
 Ah me, unhappy ! Let thy friendly hand
 Cover my head again : I am ashamed
 Of what I said : O cover me : the tear
 Drops from mine eye, and on my cheek I feel
 The warm blush rise. How painful, when the sense
 Resumes its former functions ! To be mad
 Is dreadful ; yet in this a softer ill,
 We have no sense of the calamity.

NUR. Thy head again I cover : when will death
 Cover my body? From this length of life
 Much have I learnt : best suited to the state
 Of mortal life are mutual friendships form'd
 With moderation, such as take not root
 Deep in the soul, affections that with ease
 May be relax'd, or closer bound at will.
 For that one heart should feel the ills of two,
 This is a grievous burden, as for her
 I am oppress'd with sorrow. So through life
 A fondness that affects the heart, they say,
 Brings more of pain than pleasure, and more wars
 Against the health : thus what is violent

234. Here was the gymnasium of Trœzene ; and here a temple was erected to Diana by Saron, an ancient king of Trœzene, who gave his name to the Saronic gulf. *Pausan. Cor.*

Hath less of praise from me, than what proceeds
With moderation; this the wise allow.

CHOR. Thou aged matron, faithful from her youth
To the imperial Phædra, we behold
Her cruel sufferings; but no symptoms mark
What her disease may be; of this we wish
To make enquiry, and to learn from thee.

NUR. I am not well assured; nor will she speak it.

CHOR. But of her sufferings what may be the cause?

NUR. Nor know I this, for she conceals it all.

CHOR. Beneath her malady she wastes away.

NUR. No food for three long days hath pass'd her lips.

CHOR. Through sickness this, or is she bent on death?

NUR. From food abstaining soon her life must end.

CHOR. This sure must be displeasing to her lord.

NUR. She hides it all, and speaks not of her illness.

CHOR. But he must mark it, when he views her face.

NUR. It chances he is absent from this land.

CHOR. Hast thou been earnest in th' attempt to learn
What her disease, and what thus racks her mind?

NUR. I have tried all, but vain are my attempts:
Yet shall I not e'en now abate my zeal,
That thou may'st bear me witness with what love
I share th' afflictions of my wretched queen.
O my loved child, let us forget the words
We each have spoke; do thou recall thy sweet
And gentle nature; clear that clouded brow;
Persist not thus: and I, if then in aught
I shew'd not prompt obedience, will no more
Gainsay thee, studious of more pleasing words.
If thy disease be haply of those ills
Which may not be related, see these dames
Are ready to relieve it: be it such
As we to men may freely mention, speak it,
That we may call the skilful Leach to bring
His medicinal aid. Why art thou silent?
Thou shou'dst not be thus silent. Have I spoke
Amiss? reprove me: if my words are right,

Assent to them. What is it ! Speak ; look on me.
 Unhappy me ! My female friends, in vain
 I labour, nor avail more than before.
 Then my words sooth'd her not ; nor does she now
 Regard them. But know this, though thou remain
 Relentless as the sea, if thou wilt die,
 Thy sons thou wilt betray, nor will they share
 The rich inheritance of their father's house.
 This by the warlike Amazonian queen
 I swear ; for she hath left a son to lord it
 Over thy sons, of spurious birth indeed,
 But true legitimate thought : thou know'st him well,
 Hippolytus.

PHÆ.

Ah me !

NUR.

Doth it then touch thee ?

PHÆ.

Thou hast undone me : by the gods I beg thee,
 O never let me hear that name again.

NUR.

Dost thou see this ? Thou judgest right : why then
 Not benefit thy sons, and save thy life ?

PHÆ.

I love my sons : another storm bursts o'er me.

NUR.

Thy hands, my child, are innocent of blood ?

PHÆ.

My hands are guiltless, but my heart's defiled.

NUR.

Some foreign ill, brought on thee by thy foes ?

PHÆ.

I by a friend, unwilling both, am ruin'd.

NUR.

By some misdeed hath Theseus injured thee ?

PHÆ.

Would I were found not to have injured him !

NUR.

What dreadful thing makes thee thus wish to die ?

PHÆ.

Let me do wrong : I do no wrong to thee.

NUR.

Not willingly : in thine my will must fail.

PHÆ.

What, wou'dst thou force me, hanging on my hand ?

NUR.

Nay, on thy knees ; and never will I quit them.

PHÆ.

Ill would befall thee, shou'dst thou know these ills.

NUR.

Can worse befall me than the loss of thee ?

PHÆ.

'Twere ruin to thee, yet it brings me glory.

NUR.

Why hide it then, if useful what I ask ?

PHÆ.

Because from glory I must sink to shame.

NUR.

Speak it then, greater glory will be thine.

PHÆ.

Go ; by the gods forbear, and quit my hand.

- NUR. Never, till thou indulge me this request.
 PHÆ. That suppliant hand revering I will tell thee.
 NUR. 'Tis mine in silence to attend thy words.
 PHÆ. Ah, wretched mother, what a love was thine!
 NUR. A Bull she lov'd; or what dost thou intend?
 PHÆ. And thou, unhappy sister, wife of Bacchus!
 NUR. Why thus, my child, recall what shames thy race?
 PHÆ. I am the third on whom this ruin falls.
 NUR. My heart sinks in me: whither tends thy speech?
 PHÆ. Thence nothing new this misery crushes me.
 NUR. Yet know I nought of what I wish to hear.
 PHÆ. Ah wou'dst thou tell me what is mine to speak!
 NUR. I am no prophetess in things obscure.
 PHÆ. Ah, tell me what is this, which men call love.
 NUR. The sweetest pleasure, and severest pain.
 PHÆ. Taught by experience one of them I feel.
 NUR. What says my child? Dost thou then love some man?
 PHÆ. Who is this son of th' Amazonian queen?
 NUR. Hippolytus.
 PHÆ. By thee he's named, not me.
 NUR. Ah me, what wou'dst thou say? O thou hast made me
 Most wretched. No, this is not to be borne:
 My female friends, shall I bear this, and live?
 The day is hateful to me, and this light
 Is hateful: I will throw me, cast me down,
 And leave this life: farewell, I am no more.
 For now the wise, the modest are in love,
 Not willingly indeed, with ill. No god
 Is Venus then? Nay, if there be aught else
 More potent than a god: she hath undone
 My royal mistress, me, and all the house.
 CHOR. Didst thou hear this, didst thou hear
 Words unmeet to strike the ear?
 Heard'st thou the royal dame her griefs reveal,
 Which silence should conceal?
 O, had I died, e'er thus thy friend

Stray'd from sober reason wide :
 Ah me, what griefs my bosom rend,
 Griefs to human life allied !
 Fate hath pitch'd her toils around :
 Cou'dst thou ills like these display ?
 Why awaits thy life this day ?
 Some new misfortune will this house confound ;
 For Venus lights this fatal flame,
 Thou hapless Cretan dame !

PHÆ. Træzenian dames, who this remotest verge
 Of Pelops' realms inhabit, through the long
 And silent night oft have my thoughts revolv'd
 The sad depravity of human life ;
 How prone to ill, through no defect, I think,
 Of nature : she to many gives the sense
 Of what is right ; but my reflections lead me
 To this conclusion, What is good we know,
 And feel, but do it not ; through listlessness
 Some want the spirit to act : and some prefer
 The fav'rite pleasure to the work of virtue ;
 For life hath various pleasures : ill-spent hours
 Of frivolous conversation, indolence,
 A pleasing ill, and shame ; but there are two
 Of these, the one not ill, the other sinks
 The house in misery : were the use of each
 Clearly distinguish'd, they no more would be
 Two, with the self-same letters each inscribed.
 When thus with serious thought I had revolv'd,
 I deem'd that no allurements had the pow'r
 To cheat my sense, and bend it to forsake
 Its honest purpose : but I will unfold
 The workings of my mind. Soon as I felt
 The wound of love, my thoughts were turn'd how best
 To bear it : hence in silence I conceal'd
 My pain ; for faithless is the tongue ; it knows
 T' enforce the passions when discover'd, oft
 Working the greatest ills. My next resolve
 Was well to bear the madness, and o'ercome it

With chaste austerity. When these avail'd not
To vanquish love, I deem'd it noblest for me
To die: these resolutions none will blame.
For be this mine: if virtuous be my deeds,
Let them not lie obscure: nor, be they base,
Let me have many to attest my shame.
I knew how foul this fond desire, I knew
How infamous, and as a woman well
I knew in what abhorrence it is held.
O that she perish'd, suff'ring every ill,
Who with adulterate love the nuptial bed
First shamed! The houses of the great gave birth
To this disease, and thence th' infection spread:
For when base deeds from those of highest rank
Receive a sanction, all below esteem them
As objects of their honest imitation.
But her I hate, whose tongue to modest phrase
Is filed, whilst thoughts of lewdness in her heart
She dares to harbour. Sovereign, sea-born Venus,
How can such look their husbands in the face,
Nor tremble at the darkness that assists them,
And fear the roof, the walls should find a tongue
To publish their misdeeds? I will not live,
My friends, to shame my husband and my sons:
No: 'midst the splendor of th' Athenian state
Free let them dwell, and flourish in renown,
Illustrious for their mother: for the mind,
Though form'd for noble daring, sinks enslaved,
When conscious of a mother's foul misdeeds,
Or of a father's: for the honest mind,
Conscious of just and virtuous thought, possesses
A worth excelling life; and time will shew
The bad distinct, as when a virgin holds
Her mirror: ne'er 'mongst such may I be seen!

CHOR. How lovely in each state is chastity,

Which brings to mortals the sublimest fame!

NUR. A sudden terror, lady, seiz'd my heart

When first I heard thy griefs; I now perceive

My weakness: it is ever thus: the thoughts
Draw wisdom from reflection. Nothing strange
Affects thee, nothing singular: severe
The anger of the goddess rushes on thee.
Lovest thou? What wonder! Many feel the force
Of love: wilt thou for this refuse to live?
Ill would it fare with those that love, and those
That shall hereafter love, if they must die.
For Venus is resistless, when she comes
In all her force, but gentle to the heart
That to her influence yields: the proud, that bids
Scornful defiance to her pow'r, she seizes,
And, as too well thou knowest, chastises him.
She ranges through the sky, and in the sea
Commands the waves; and all things owe their birth
To her: she sows, she gives the seeds of love,
And all, that live on earth, from him arise.
Those, who revolve the annals of old times,
And those, who tread the Muses' hallow'd haunts,
Know how the breast of Jove with Semele
Was once enamour'd; to the heav'nly seats
How beauteous bright Aurora, touch'd with love,
Bore Cephalus; yet in the skies they hold
Their seats, nor fly th' assemblies of the gods,
Who hold them dear, by the same pow'r, I ween,
Themselves subdued: and wilt not thou sustain it?
Thy father on these terms must give thee life,
Or, these disliked, seek other gods that rule
By other laws. How many, dost thou think,
Men too of deepest wisdom, see their beds
Tainted with this disease, yet not appear
To see it? And how many fathers aid
Their sons who love amiss? For to conceal
What honour dares not own, is wisdom's part.
It were too nice through all the parts of life
To labour at exactness; on the roof,
For shelter form'd, too curious workmanship
Were lost. But in misfortune sunk, like thine,

How gain the shore? If life hath more of good
To thee than ill, since thou art mortal, deem it
Well with thee. But no more of these weak thoughts,
O my dear child, no more of these reproaches:
What other than reproach can be the will
To be more perfect than the gods? Be firm,
If love hath seiz'd thy heart; it is the work
Of love's all-pow'rful goddess: if it pains thee,
Try to relieve thy pain: know there are charms,
And spells of wond'rous potency to heal
This sickness of the soul; their influence
Shall give thee ease. In their inventions slow
Were men, but readier far is woman's skill.

CHOR. What she hath urged is to thy present ill,
Phædra, most lenient; yet hast thou my praise:
That praise perhaps less pleasing to thine ear,
And wakes more anguish than her soothing words.

PHÆ. This is what ruins many a noble house,
And many a peopled town, this glozing speech.
Behoves us now no blandishment that charms
The ear, but what excites to virtuous deed.

NUR. Wherefore this lofty strain? Thou hast not need
Of fine-form'd words, but of a man: and soon
May they be known who most discreetly speak
What so concerns thee. If this malady
Touch'd not thy life, and modesty prevail'd,
I would not for thy pleasure and thy love
To this have led thee; but to save thy life
Is the great business: let not that find blame.

PHÆ. Fie on thy tongue: wilt thou not close thy lips?
Wilt thou not cease to urge thy shameful plea?

NUR. It may be shameful, but consults for thee
Better than honour: it would save thy life,
In which more merit lies, than in a name,
Glorying in which it is thy wish to die.

PHÆ. Now by the gods, (for shameful are thy words,
Though well design'd,) no further urge thy plea,
That, if I give my yielding soul to love,

I should do well: for though with specious phrase
 Thou varnish o'er the baseness, I should fall
 On that disgrace and ruin, which I fly.

NUR. If such thy resolution, it behoved thee
 Not from the right to deviate; but e'en thus
 Be ruled by me; do me this grace at least.
 I in the house have medicines, of pow'r
 To charm the rage of love; these to my thought
 Lately occur'd; let not thy fears prevail.
 They, without shame or injury to sense,
 Will ease thee of this sickness of the mind.
 But thou must have some token from the youth
 Belov'd, some word, some relic of his vest,
 Of two in union close to knit one love.

PHÆ. An unguent, or a potion is the charm?

NUR. Wish not to be inform'd, my child, but eas'd.

PHÆ. Too much, I fear, thou trustest to thy wisdom.

NUR. Fear every thing, be sure: what dost thou fear?

PHÆ. Lest to the son of Theseus thou disclose it.

NUR. Confide in me; my care shall order this
 Right well: do thou, O sovereign, sea-born Venus,
 Do thou but aid me! To my friends within
 T' impart the rest is all that's needful now.

PHÆDRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. O love, O love, that through the eyes
 Instillest softly warm desire,
 Pleas'd in the soul with sweet surprise
 Entrancing rapture to inspire,
 Never with wild ungovern'd sway
 Rush on my heart, and force it to obey:
 For not the lightning's fire,
 Nor stars swift-darting through the sky,
 Equal the shafts sent by this son of Jove,
 When his hand gives them force to fly,
 Kindling the flames of love.

- ANTIS. 1. In vain at Alpheus' stream, in vain
 At bright Apollo's Pythian shrine
 Doth Greece, the votive victim slain,
 With reverence offer rites divine:
 To him, who holds the high employ
 T' unlock the golden gates of love and joy,
 No honours we assign,
 The tyrant of the human breast,
 That ravages where'er he takes his way,
 And sinks mankind with woes oppress
 Beneath his ruthless sway.
- STRO. 2. Thee, Œchalia's blooming pride,
 Virgin yet in love untried,
 Ne'er before by Hymen led,
 Stranger to the nuptial bed,
 Unexperienc'd, hapless fair,
 From thy house with wild affright
 Hast'ning, like the frenetic dame
 That to the Bacchic orgies speeds her flight,
 With blood, with smoke, with flame,
 And all the terrors wild of war,
 To nuptials stain'd with gore did Venus give,
 And bade Alcmena's son the beauteous prize receive.
- ANTIS. 2. Say, ye sacred tow'rs that stand
 Bulwarks of the Theban land;
 And ye streams, that welling play
 From the fount of Dirce, say
 How to you came the queen of love:
 'Midst the lightning's rapid fire,
 Whilst around her thunders roar,
 She caus'd the blasted Semele t' expire,
 The hapless nymph that bore
 Bacchus from th' embrace of Jove.
 Thus over all she spreads her tyrant pow'r,

572. Iole, daughter of Eurytus king of Œchalia, who proposed her to him that excelled in the bow, but refused her to Hercules, whose superiority was acknowledged. Hercules, enraged at the affront, ravaged the country, slew the sons of Eurytus, and seized the lady. *Scholiast from Herodotus.*

As restless as the bee that roves from flow'r to flow'r.

PHÆ. Be silent, O my friends. I am undone.

CHOR. What is there dreadful, Phædra, in thy house?

PHÆ. Forbear, that I may hear their words within.

CHOR. Thy words forebode some ill: but I am dumb.

PHÆ. Ah me, unhappy me, how great my woes!

CHOR. What mean these lamentations? Why this voice
Of sorrow? Tell us, lady, what thou hearest,
That with this sudden terror strikes thy heart.

PHÆ. O ruin, ruin! Stand you at the door,
And hear what tumult in the house is rais'd.

CHOR. Thou standest nigh the door; and from the house
Issuing the voice comes to thy ear: but tell me,
Tell me what dreadful ill hath happen'd there.

PHÆ. The son of that fierce Amazon is loud,
And high in anger 'gainst my servant raves.

CHOR. I hear his voice, but to my ear his words
Come not distinct; to thine they come, to thine
The doors transmit what in the house he speaks.

PHÆ. He calls her vile procuress, her lord's bed
Falsely betraying: that I hear distinct.

CHOR. Alas for thy unhappy fate! Lov'd queen,
Thou art betray'd. What counsel shall I give thee?
The secrets of thy soul are all disclos'd,
And thou art ruin'd, by thy friends betray'd.

PHÆ. Yes, she hath told my griefs, and so undone me:
To ease, to heal the sickness of my soul
Friendly her purpose, but dishonourable.

CHOR. What then, unhappy sufferer, wilt thou do?

PHÆ. I know not, save one thing, forthwith to die:
Death is the only cure of all my ills.

PHÆDRA, HIPPOLYTUS, NURSE, CHORUS.

HIPP. O parent Earth, and thou all-seeing Sun,

607. The translator adopts the very ingenious correction of Dr. Musgrave, who for *μίλι* proposes to read *μόλι φάτις*, v. 579. -

What words of horrid import have I heard !

NUR. Ah, speak no more, lest some one mark thy words.

HIPP. Not speak, mine ears thus wounded with thy baseness !

NUR. Nay, I conjure thee by this beauteous hand.

HIPP. Away, keep off thy hands, touch not my robes.

NUR. Thus at thy knees I beg, undo me not.

HIPP. Why, since thou say'st thou hast spoke nothing ill ?

NUR. Affairs like this may not be told to all.

HIPP. Things honest may with honour be made known.

NUR. Ah, do not rashly violate thine oath.

HIPP. My tongue indeed hath sworn, but not my mind.

NUR. What wilt thou do ? In ruin sink thy friends !

HIPP. I scorn you, nor hold friendship with the base.

NUR. Forgive me : human weakness oft must err.

HIPP. Wherefore, O Jove, beneath the sun's fair light
That specious mischief, Woman, didst thou place ?
For with the human race if thou wou'dst fill
The peopled earth, no need they should be rais'd
From Woman ; at thy shrines might men present
Iron, or brass, or heaps of massy gold,
To purchase children, in proportion giv'n
To the rich offering : Man might then have lived
Free, and uncumber'd with this female burden.
But now, to lead this mischief to our house,
Our wealth must be expended. Hence appears
How great a mischief Woman is to Man ;
The father, who begot her, bred her up,
Gives her a dowry, to another house
Consigning her, to rid him of the ill :
He, who receives the baleful ill, rejoices,
Adding each splendid ornament, and robes
Elaborately nice th' enchanting image,
Unhappy, all the riches of his house
On her exhausting. Is th' alliance form'd
With those of noble rank ? He must perforce
Keep with apparent joy th' uneasy bed.
Or finds he in his choice domestic sweets,
But to the ignoble and the base allied ?

That evil he suppresses with the good.
Happier who 'scapes both these, and to his house
Leads a plain, gentle-manner'd, simple wife.
I hate the knowing dame, nor in my house
Be one more wise than woman ought to be:
For Venus in these knowing dames with ease
Engenders wiles; from all which folly far
Simplicity removes th' unplotting wit.
But female servant never on the wife
Should be attendant; let them rather dwell
With animals that want the pow'r of speech;
That they may neither have with whom to talk,
Nor hear their conversation in return:
But now the wicked mistress in the house
Contrives her wicked purpose, and abroad
The base attendant bears the lewd design.
So thou, vile wretch, art come to me, to form
Detested commerce with my father's bed,
Too holy to be touch'd: thy impure words
Pollute my ears, and in the living stream
They must be cleans'd: how then should I commit
A villainy, when but to hear it named
Defiles me? But know this, my piety
Protects thee, woman: had I not been caught
At unawares, bound by a sacred oath,
I never could have held me from disclosing
This to my father. But the house, while Theseus
Is absent from his country, I will leave;
Yet shall my lips be closed: when he returns,
I with him will return; then shall I see
How you will look my father in the face,
Thou, and thy mistress; I shall know you both,
Conscious of your attempts. Perdition seize you!
My soul can never have its fill of hate
Tow'rds women, though I always speak my hate,
For they are always wicked. Either see
That some one forms your sex to modesty,
Or let me always taunt you with reproach.

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

CHOR. How wretched, how unfortunate the state
Of women! Disappointed of our hopes,
What skill, what prudence can instruct us now
To free thee from th' inextricable toils?

PHÆ. This punishment is just. O earth! O light!
How shall I shun my fate, or how, my friends,
Conceal this ill? What god will design to aid,
What mortal would appear confederate,
Or fav'ring deeds of baseness? From this ill
Life hath no refuge; and you see me here
The most distress'd, most wretched of her sex.

CHOR. Ruin indeed hangs o'er thee; nought avail'd
Thy servant's artful trains: but all falls ill.

PHÆ. Vile wretch, thou base corrupter of thy friends,
What mischief hast thou wrought me? May great Jove,
The author of my race, with lightning blast thee,
And sweep thee from the earth! Did I not charge thee,
For I perceiv'd thy purpose, to be silent
Of what afflicts me now? But thou thy tongue
Cou'dst not restrain; I therefore shall not die
With glory: new resolves must now be form'd:
For he, inflamed with rage, will to his father
Disclose my fault, to aged Pittheus tell
My miseries, and all the country round
Spread the reproachful story. Perish thou,
And all like thee, that by inglorious means
Are prompt to aid their friends against their will!

NUR. Thou, lady, I confess, hast cause to blame
What I have done amiss; for what afflicts thee
O'erpowers cool discretion. Yet this plea,
Wou'dst thou admit it, I might urge; thy years
Of infancy I nurtured, and my heart
Glowes with affection tow'rds thee: for thy pains
I sought medicinal relief, but found
What least I wish'd: had I succeeded well,
I had been reckon'd 'mongst the wise: our minds

Are so disposed to judge from the event.

PHÆ. Are these things just? Bring they redress, t' engage,
When thou hast pierc'd my heart, in vain harangues?

NUR. I urge the plea no more: I was not wise:
Yet hence some means of safety may be found.

PHÆ. I'll hear no more: thou cou'dst before advise
What honour sickens at, and thy attempts
Were base: begone, and of thyself take care:
For me, as honour dictates I shall act.
Ye generous daughters of Trœzene, now
Grant me one poor request, give me your faith
In silence to conceal what you have heard.

CHOR. Daughter of Jove, revered Diana, hear
My oath: I never will disclose thine ills.

PHÆ. 'Tis nobly said: Yet one thing have I found,
Revolving deep, t' alleviate these ills,
That to my children I may add a life
Of glory, and in this affliction give
Myself relief: for never will I shame
My Cretan lineage, never will I come
Into the presence of the royal Theseus,
Stain'd with this baseness, for a single life.

CHOR. What desperate deed dost thou intend to do?

PHÆ. To die; but how, this will I ponder well.

CHOR. Talk not thus wildly.

PHÆ. And be thy advice
Less wild. Since Venus hath decreed my fall,
This day quitting life I will delight her,
And yield to cruel love the victory.
Yet to another shall my death be cause
Of ill; that he may learn not to be proud
At my afflictions, but by sharing them
Be taught a lesson of humanity.

CHORUS.

STR. 1. O had I on some rock's rude height
Amidst its cliffs a place;
To wing from thence my airy flight

One of the feather'd race,
 High would I rise the billows o'er
 Which Adria breaks against the shore;
 Or to the sorrow-streaming Po,
 Where Phaethon, the lost, the lov'd,
 His sisters mourn by pity mov'd,
 And bid their ceaseless tears, beside
 Their mournful father's purple tide,
 In drops of lucid amber flow.

ANTIS. 1. Or to the famed Hesperian plains,
 Whose rich trees bloom with gold,
 To join the grief-attuned strains,
 My winged progress hold:
 Beyond whose shores no passage gave
 The ruler of the purple wave;
 But Atlas stands his stately height,
 The awful boundary of the skies:
 There fountains of Ambrosia rise,
 Wat'ring the seat of Jove: her stores
 Luxuriant there the rich soil pours,
 All, which the sense of gods delights.

STRO. 2. Ah Cretan bark! thy snowy sails
 The roaring ocean o'er
 With pride expanding to the gales
 My queen in triumph bore
 From seats of happiness, to know
 The sharpest pangs of nuptial woe:
 For when she left the Gnosian land,
 She flew, misfortune in her train,
 To splendid Athens o'er the main;
 With all ill omens on her way
 She moor'd in the Munychian bay,
 And fix'd her foot on th' Attic strand.

ANTIS. 2. For there with wild unhallow'd fires,
 The fierce disease of love,
 Cithera's queen her soul inspires,
 Tumultuous rage to move.
 And now, with painful ills oppress'd,

Despair and anguish rend her breast;
 Hence to the last relief she flies:
 Awed by th' ungentle goddess, round
 Her snowy neck the noose is bound;
 Anxious to guard her honest fame,
 And quench love's sorrow-kindling flame,
 That blazes in her breast, she dies.

SERV. Help, quickly help, all that are near the house: [*within.*
 The queen, the wife of Theseus, is no more.

CHOR. Ah me! the deed is done: the fatal noose
 Is tied: this royal lady is no more.

SERV. Will you not haste? Will you not bring the steel
 Sharp-edged, to cut this bond which girds her neck?

SEMI. What shall we do, my friends? Enter the house,
 And from the queen unloose this strangling cord?

SEMI. What, are no active servants there? Through life
 A busy forwardness I deem unsafe.

SERV. Lay straight the wretched corse, with decency
 Composed, a mournful office for my lords.

CHOR. The hapless lady, as I hear, is dead;
 Already as a corse they lay her forth.

THESEUS, CHORUS.

THES. Know you, ye females, why this voice of woe
 Sounds in my house? For loud my servants' cries
 Are heard: nor deigns my house with open gates
 To welcome my return, and greet its lord.
 Suffers the age of Pitheus aught of ill?
 Though far advanced in the decline of life,
 I should be griev'd to lose him from my house.

CHOR. These sorrows for the aged are not rais'd:
 The young will grieve thee, Theseus, by their death.

THES. Ah me! my children, are they robbed of life?

CHOR. They live; their mother, most to grieve thee, dead.

THES. My wife! Say'st thou my wife? By what mischance?

CHOR. Around her neck she fix'd the fatal cord.

THES. With grief o'erpow'r'd, or some calamity?

CHOR. Thus much we know: but lately to thy house,

Theseus, I come, to wail thy miseries.

THES. Wretch that I am, why longer am I crown'd
With these inwoven branches, from the shrine
In an ill hour return'd? Unbar the gates,
My servants; haste, that I my poor lost wife
May see, who by her death hath made me wretched.

CHOR. Ill-fated queen, o'erwhelm'd with miseries,
Severely hast thou suffer'd: thou hast done
A deed, that in confusion sinks this house,
Who with unhallow'd violence hast rush'd
On death, th' unhappy work of thine own hands:
What cruel fate darkens thy wretched life?

THES. How dreadful are my sufferings, which for thee,
My dear lost wife, I feel! Of all my ills
These are the worst. O fortune, with what weight
Of misery dost thou crush me, and my house!
This is a stain, fix'd by some vengeful pow'r,
Surpassing thought: all that remains of life
Must waste away in anguish; such a sea
Of woe swells o'er me, never can I rise
Again, or stem the surge of this affliction.—
How dismal! with what words shall I address,
Wretch that I am, thee, and thy cruel fate,
Unhappy! Like a bird thou from my hand
Art gone, and seen no more; thy mournful flight,
Mournful to me, wing'd to the realms beneath.
Woe, woe, woe, woe, intolerable woe!
For what misdeeds of old, for what offence

850. It was usual for those who had gone to consult the oracle of Apollo, to return crowned with the laurel of the god; and all his family went forth to meet him, and congratulated his arrival. *Scholiast.* Thus Livy tells us, that Q. Fabius Pictor, having been sent to consult the oracle at Delphi, at his return declared in the senate that he had been commanded by the Priestess, as he had approached the oracle and performed his sacrifice crowned with laurel, so to return to his ship wearing the crown, and not to lay it down before he arrived at Rome: that he had carefully and religiously observed whatever had been commanded him; and had placed the crown on the altar of Apollo at Rome. *Liv. xxiii. c. 11. Valckenaer.*

854. The doors are here opened, and the body of the queen discovered, the servants standing round it.

Against the gods by those of former times
Are these calamities now heap'd on me?

CHOR. Not thee alone, O king, these ills befall :
With many hast thou lost a much-loved wife.

THES. Low in the earth, low in the darksome earth
To have my mansion in the shade of death
Is now my wish, since I no more enjoy
Thy dearest converse: me hast thou destroy'd
More than thyself. What cause, unhappy woman,
Whence may I learn the fatal cause, that urged
Thy heart to this sad deed? Speak, some of you,
What hath befallen; or doth this royal house
Shelter beneath its roof this numerous train
Of servants for no purpose? Wretched me,
For thy sake wretched, how distress'd to see
These sorrows of my house, not to be borne,
Not to be utter'd! But my all is lost,
My house is desolate, my children orphans.

CHOR. O, thou hast left us, left us desolate,
Dearest of women, thou most excellent
Of all, whom in its course yon splendid sun
Surveys, or through the night the glitt'ring moon
Wheeling her course! Ill-fated queen, what woes
Afflict thy house! Mine eyes are wet with tears,
That flow for thy misfortunes; and yet more
I tremble for the ills that must succeed.

THES. Forbear, forbear. What is that letter, hung
From her loved hand? Will it not tell me something?
This letter 'midst her sorrows did she write,
Perchance some dear request or for her bed,
Or for her children: be thou confident,
Henceforth no woman shares the bed, or house
Of Theseus. Though, ah me! thou art no more,
Yet the impression of thy golden ring
Is flattering to me: let me then burst ope
The seal, and read what thou hast given in charge.

CHOR. Alas! alas! ill after ill the god
Brings on us: life is therefore irksome to me

Through what is done; for ruin'd, and no more,
Deem I, alas, the house of my loved lords.

Stern pow'r, if it be possible, yet spare
This house; o'erturn it not; thy suppliant hear,
Hear my petition: but my boding mind
Presages, as a prophet, nought but ill.

THES. Past utterance, past endurance, what an ill
Rolls on the former ill! Unhappy me!

CHOR. What may this be? If I may know it, tell me.

THES. This letter hath a voice, a dreadful voice:
Ah, whither shall I fly, to shun this weight
Of ills that sinks me! What, ah what a cry
Sounds from this letter! Wretched, wretched me!

CHOR. Ah me! thou utterest words that point to ill.

THES. My lips no longer shall in silence hold
This unexampled, this destructive ill:
But, O my country, O my country, hear it:
Hippolytus hath dared to touch my bed
By violence, revering not the eye,
The awful eye of Jove. But, O my father,
O Neptune, who long since hast promis'd me
To grant me three requests, this shall be one,
Destroy my son: O, let him not escape
This day, if thou wilt ratify thy promise.

CHOR. Now, by the gods, O king, recal those words:
Hereafter, trust me, thou wilt know thy error.

THES. They shall not be recall'd: nay, I will drive him
Far from this land: two fates hang over him,
And one shall crush him; either Neptune's pow'r,
Moved by my imprecations, to the house
Of death shall hurl him; or an exile hence,
And wand'ring wretched in a foreign land,
He shall be reft of all the joys of life.

CHOR. But see, Hippolytus himself thy son
Comes opportunely: royal Theseus, calm
This passion which transports thee, and consult
How best t' advance the welfare of thy house.

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, CHORUS.

- HIPP. I heard thy cry, my father, and am come
With speed: but what the cause of these loud plaints
I know not; this from thee I wish to learn.—
Ha! What a sight is here! I see thy wife,
My father, dead: I marvel much at this,
For late I left her, very late I left her
In the fair light of heav'n: what hath befallen her?
How died she? This I wish to learn from thee,
My father. Thou art silent: in afflictions
No good can silence work; for, through desire
Of knowing all, the heart is form'd to feel
In ills e'en an avidity to hear.
Behoves not then from friends, nay more than friends,
To hide, my father, what afflicts thy soul.
- THES. Misjudging men, in many things employ'd
In vain; why do you learn a thousand arts,
With thought profound contrive, devise, invent;
But one thing know you not, nor seek to know,
To teach him wisdom who is void of sense!
- HIPP. He were a master sophist, who could force
Those to be wise, that have nor soul, nor sense
To apprehend: but so much out of time
These quaint discussions, father, that I fear
Through too much grief thy tongue at random errs.
- THES. Well were it if we had some certain mark
To note our friends; what would distinctly shew
Their minds, the faithful from the counterfeit.
Or that each mortal had two voices, one

978. The man, who has been deceived and injured by a false tongue, may naturally enough form such a wish; it expresses the indignation of an honest mind, and is in a good tragic style. But what shall we say to the historian that gravely asserts the fact? Diodorus Siculus, lib. ii. tells us, that under the equinoctial line there is a fertile and pleasant island, the natives of which are in many respects different from the inhabitants of our world; they are, he says, exceedingly beautiful, and the turn of their limbs is finely proportioned: among their other peculiarities they have something singular in the formation of their tongue, which is divided, and comes double from the root; therefore they have the greatest variety

The utterance of right, of aught besides
 The other; that the speech to mischief framed,
 And foul injustice, by the voice of right
 Convicted, we no more might be deceiv'd.

HIPP. Hath some false friend accused me to thy ear?
 In nothing am I conscious of the charge.
 I am astonish'd; for thy words, which swerve
 From temperate reason wide, astonish me.

THES. To what an height will human madness rise!
 Where will its impious daring fix its bounds?
 If each succeeding age gains strength, and swell
 With ranker villainy, so that the last
 Exceeds the measure of the crimes forepass'd,
 Another earth it will behove the gods
 T' adjoin to this, fit mansion to receive
 Apart this wicked and nefarious race.
 But turn your eyes on him, he is my son,
 Yet hath he stain'd my bed, by her that lies
 In death convicted of his villainy.
 Shew then, since this inexpiable guilt
 Is thine, before thy father shew thy face.
 Dost thou, as one of higher excellence,
 Hold converse with the gods? Art thou then chaste?
 Art thou unstain'd with guilt? Such proud pretence
 Persuades not me; so should I charge the gods
 As ignorant and blind. Now boast, now truck
 For vain applause; guiltless of blood prepare
 The vegetable viands, in the lore

of modulation, and can not only express every articulate sound of the human voice, but imitate the different notes of birds, and indeed every peculiarity of sound: but what is most to be admired, they can with perfect ease discourse on different subjects with different persons at the same time; each voluble plicature distinctly supporting its separate conversation.—What a valuable acquisition would it be, if any of our adventurers should be so fortunate as to touch at this island, and could prevail upon some of the beautiful polyphonous females to embark with them. Among other desirable advantages, this importation might in time give a very agreeable temperament to that solemn taciturnity for which the English ladies are so remarkable.

Of Orpheus train'd ; pretend the Bacchic rites,
And of much learning raise th' illusive smoke,
Now thou art caught. But such to shun my voice
To all gives warning ; for with specious words
They seek t' ensnare, and hide their base designs.
She's dead : in that thou deem'st thy safety lies :
But, thou vile wretch, most clearly are thy crimes
By that discover'd : for what oath, what words
Can be more strong than this, and prove thee guiltless ?
But thou wilt say, she hated thee, and urge
Th' abhorrence of a stepdame to the son
Sprung from a former bed : an ill exchange
Thou must allow it, if through hate of thee
She barter'd life, and all she held most dear.
But loose desires taint not the hearts of men,
Which uncontroll'd in women hold dominion :
Yet have I known young men not more secure
Than women, when their warm blood Venus fires :
And the bold plea, that they are men, avails them.
But wherefore waste I words on such a wretch ?
Hence, from this land to exile get thee gone,
Nor dare in heav'n-built Athens set thy foot,
Nor on the coasts that own my regal pow'r.
If, injured thus, with pity I were moved,
No more the Isthmian Sinis would attest
He fell by me, but that my vaunts are vain :
Nor would the savage Sciron's sea-beat rocks
Proclaim my vengeance to the bad severe.

CHOR. I know not whom of mortal race to call
Happy : what once was so, subverted falls.

1007. Orpheus is one of the most celebrated characters of antiquity. His excellence in music was his least praise ; he was the inventor of medicine, and the father of philosophy : versed in the theology of Egypt, he introduced many of their religious rites and mystic initiations into Greece, particularly the orgies of Bacchus. He taught to abstain from animal food, perhaps in his legislative capacity, as the only means of preventing the savage Thracians, whom he civilized, from eating human flesh. The very ingenious Dr. Burney has drawn together all that remains of antiquity relating to this great man : to his account the reader is referred.

HIPP. This violence, this transport of thy soul
Is dreadful: yet this charge, which has the face
Of many proofs, were it unfolded well,
Would be found void of truth. I have no skill
To gloze a set speech to the multitude;
But to my equals, and a few, more prompt;
And this is something: for the futile, held
Worthless among the wise, their rattling tongues
Roll on, attuned to charm the multitude,
Yet in this evil plight I must perforce
Unlock my lips; and where begin, but where
Thy charge assail'd me deeming I must fall
Without excuse? Seest thou this light, this earth?
In these is not a man, howe'er thy voice
Dissents, more pure than I am. To revere
The gods is my first knowledge, and my friends
To treat with kindness, such as harbour not
A thought of wrong, too modest to propose
Aught ill, or minister to deeds of baseness.
I never make unseemly jest of those
That share my converse; to my absent friends
The same as to the present. In one point,
Wherein my guilt is now deem'd manifest;
Of virgin purity; for to this day
I am a stranger to the couch of love;
Nor know I of its rites more than the tale
May have inform'd me, or the painter's pencil
Presented to mine eye; yet on such picture
Dwells not mine eye delighted, for my mind
Is as a virgin's pure. But thee perchance
My pure and virgin modesty persuades not:
Behoves thee then to shew what pow'rful cause
Seduced it: had she beauty, had she charms
Superior to her sex? Or in thy house,
Sharing thy bed, could I have hope to dwell?
How vain and senseless this? but sovereign pow'r
Hath charms e'en for the wise. Far otherwise
I deem, unless that sovereign pow'r hath first

Corrupted those, whom it hath charms to please.
 Excelling in each manly exercise
 Practis'd in Greece, I wish'd to be the first;
 And second in the state among my friends,
 Men of the best and noblest minds, to live
 Happy; for happiness is hence ensured,
 And danger hence departing leaves a grace
 Superior to the charms of royalty.
 One plea hath not been urged; thou hast the rest:
 If I had one to witness what I am,
 If she could view the light of heav'n, whilst thus
 I urge my just defence, thy searching mind
 Would see the guilty. Now by Jove, whose pow'r
 The oath attests, and by the solid Earth
 I swear, that never did I touch thy bed,
 Never desired it, never form'd the thought.
 Inglorious may I perish, lost to fame,
 Lost to my country, and my father's house,
 A wand'ring exile; neither may the sea
 Receive me, nor the earth, when vital breath
 Forsakes these limbs, if I am stain'd with guilt.
 Whether through fear she hath destroy'd her life,
 I know not: more than this I may not speak.
 Chaste was thy wife, unable to be chaste;
 That pow'r is mine, but it avails me not.

CHOR. Enough thou' hast said t' acquit thee of the charge,
 Giving the sacred sanction of an oath.

THES. Does he not trust in charms and dazzling spells,
 Thus confident to work upon my mind,
 After such insults, with fair-seeming oaths?

HIPP. In this, my father, much I marvel at thee:
 Was I thy father, and wast thou my son,
 I would have kill'd thee, not have driv'n thee forth
 To exile, hadst thou dared to touch my wife.

THES. That were most just: but thus thou shalt not die,
 As 'gainst thyself thou hast pronounc'd the law.
 For to the tortur'd death that quickly comes
 Brings ease; but exiled from thy country drag

In a strange land thy miserable life
A vagabond: be this the villain's meed.

HIPP. What wilt thou do? Ah me, wilt thou not wait
What in my favour time may bring to light,
But thus impetuous drive me from the land?

THES. Beyond the ocean, the Atlantic bounds
Beyond, had I the pow'r; so much I hate thee.

HIPP. Wilt thou, nor oath, nor faith, nor augur's voice
In proof essay'd, drive me unjudg'd away?

THES. This letter, which no formal process waits,
With truth condemns thee; to the birds, that wing
Their flight above our heads, I pay no heed.

HIPP. Why, O ye gods, should I not ope my lips,
Ruin'd by you whom I revere? Not so:
Nor should I so persuade those whom I ought,
But violate a solemn oath in vain.

THES. I cannot bear thy seeming sanctity:
Hence, from thy country get thee gone with speed.

HIPP. Whither? Ah me, what hospitable house
On such a charge an exile will receive me?

THES. Such as delights to harbour those that stain
The nuptial bed, vile inmate with the vile.

HIPP. Ah me, this wounds my heart, this draws my tears,
That I appear as vile, so deem'd by thee.

THES. Thou shou'dst have groan'd, shou'dst have consider'd this
Before, when thou daredst wrong thy father's wife.

HIPP. O house, hadst thou a voice, cou'dst thou but speak,
And witness for me that no guilt is mine!

THES. Fliest thou to speechless witnesses? This letter
Shews, though it speaks not, clearly shews thy guilt.

HIPP. O could I but stand opposite, and view
Myself, how should I weep at these afflictions?

THES. More to regard thyself hath been thy wont,
Than to revere thy parents, and be just.

HIPP. Unhappy mother, mournful was my birth!
Never may friend of mine a stepdame know.

THES. Drag him hence, slaves; heard ye not my command
Long since, that he should have no harbour here?

HIPP. Not one of them will touch me without tears:

Drive me thyself, if such thy purpose, hence.

THES. I will, if my commands thou disobey:

No pity for thy exile touches me.

HIPPOLYTUS, CHORUS.

HIPP. I see it is determin'd: wretched me!

I know indeed, but know not how to speak.

Chaste daughter of Latona, of the gods

Most dear to me, associate in my haunts,

And in the chace, far from the splendid tow'rs

Of Athens will we fly: farewell thou seat

Where once Erectheus ruled, loved land farewell.

And thou, Træzene, rich in the delights

That win our lively youth to stay with thee,

Farewell; I never shall behold thee more,

And never more address thee. Come, ye youths,

Companions of my sports whilst here I stay,

Bid me a last farewell, and through your land

Conduct my steps; for one you ne'er shall see

More chaste, though otherwise my father deems.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. When Misfortune's cruel hand

Arms the shaft my heart to wound,

Then my soul with thought profound

Owens the gods' protecting pow'r,

And my sorrows are no more.

Nurs'd in this sacred lore

Hope assumes her silent stand:

But when strong before her eyes

Real scenes of life arise,

She sinks, she fades away;

For inconstant as the wind

Fate and Fortune whirl mankind

In tumult and dismay.

ANTIS. 1. Hear, ye gods, your suppliant hear:

Happy be my humble state,

Nor unknown to wealth my fate.
 Let me not oppress'd complain,
 Growing old 'midst sorrow's train,
 With slow consuming pain.
 Let not glory charm mine ear,
 But be mine a modest fame,
 Free from guilt and free from blame.
 Far from unsocial strife,
 Let not rigour sour my breast;
 But with gentle manners blest
 Be mine a peaceful life.

STRO. 2. But no more this calm is here;
 Hope is mine no more, nor peace,
 Since this brightest star of Greece,
 Sinking from the Attic skies
 On a distant land to rise,
 Is vanish'd from mine eyes;
 Such his father's wrath severe.
 O'er Trœzene's sandy shore,
 Up the woodland heights no more
 Shalt thou pursue the chase;
 Nor Dictynna, huntress maid,
 Whilst thy fleet hounds pierce the glade,
 Delight thy sports to grace.

ANTIS. 2. Now no more in youthful pride
 Shalt thou with the ruling rein
 Thy Hænetian coursers train;
 Teach their managed necks to bear
 Round the ring the rapid car,
 The lake's green margin near,
 And their measured motions guide.
 In thy father's house no more
 Shall the Muse her transports pour;
 No more her sweet voice breathe;
 Nor, to deck her green retreats,
 O'er Diana's sylvan seats,
 Shall hang the flow'ry wreath.

EFOD. At thy unhappy flight each nymph shall sigh,

Nor more their rival contests know,
 Lost as thou art to each desiring eye.
 In many a stream my tears shall flow,
 And pity for thy fate impart
 Her softer influence to my heart.
 Ah wretched mother, all thy pain
 In giving this thy son to light was vain !
 O, I am angry, with the gods.
 Ye Graces, sweet-according band,
 Why have you sent him from these lov'd abodes ?
 No baseness to his soul was known,
 But Virtue mark'd him for her own,
 Why have you forc'd him from his native land ?

But see, th' attendant of Hippolytus,
 Grief on his brow, with hasty step advances.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESS. Where shall I find the royal Theseus ? Say,
 Ye females, have you seen him enter here ?
 CHOR. See, from the house, as thou cou'dst wish, he comes.

THESEUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESS. Theseus, I bring thee tidings that must claim
 Sorrow from thee, and from thy citizens,
 Be they of Athens, or Trœzene's state.
 THES. What may this be ? Hath aught of sudden ill,
 Alarming to these neighb'ring towns, befall'n ?
 MESS. Hippolytus is dead, to speak in brief,
 Or draws his last short breath of vital air.
 THES. Whence this ? The vengeance of some injur'd husband,
 Whose wife he, as his father's, stain'd by force ?
 MESS. By his own car destroy'd, and thy request,
 Thy imprecations to thy father made,
 The monarch of the main, against thy son.
 THES. O gods ! Now, Neptune, thou art proved in deed
 My father, rightly hast thou heard my pray'rs.
 But say, how perish'd he ? how did the mace

Of Justice crush him for his wrongs to me?

MESS. We on the margin of the wave-wash'd shore
 His coursers held, and comb'd their flowing manes,
 Weeping; for one had come with tidings to us
 That on this land Hippolytus no more
 Must set his foot, by thy severe decree
 A wretched exile. He too came, and brought
 The same sad sentence to us on the strand;
 Not unattended, for a numerous train
 Of youths, his lov'd associates, follow'd him.
 After some time, mast'ring his griefs, he spoke,
 What boots it to lament? My father's bidding
 Must be obey'd: my servants, quickly yoke
 My coursers to the car, this is a city
 For me no more. Each to his office thence
 Hasten'd, and in an instant to our lord
 We led his coursers harness'd: from the nave
 He snatch'd the reins, and sprung into the seat,
 Then to the gods stretch'd forth his hands, and said,
 If ever baseness stain'd my heart, O Jove,
 May I no longer breathe this vital air;
 And let my father know how much he wrongs me,
 Whether I die, or view the light of heav'n.
 Then lash'd his steeds; attendant on our lord
 We follow near the reins the way to Argos
 Leading and Epidaurus. When we reach'd
 The tract of desert where our shore swells high
 'Gainst the Saronic gulf, a roaring sound
 Came o'er the earth, loud as the voice of Jove,
 Horrid to hear: the coursers toss'd their heads
 High, and tow'rd's heav'n erect their ears: our train
 Trembling like children marvell'd whence the noise
 Proceeded: to the sea-beat shore we cast
 Our eyes, and saw a wave so vast, it swell'd
 Reaching the skies, that to our view were lost

1273. *Sprung into the seat.* For the meaning of the word ἀρβύλῃσιν, v. 1189. see the notes of Valckenaer and Dr. Musgrave.

The cliffs of Sciron, and the Isthmus now
 No more appear'd, no more appear'd the rocks
 Of Æsculapius: swelling on, and round
 Dashing its roaring foam, on the high tide
 It reach'd the shore close to the harness'd car;
 There from its rolling and tempestuous flood
 Cast forth a bull, a monster wild and vast,
 Whose horrid bellows through th' affrighted land
 Resounded: such an hideous sight the eye
 Could not endure; a dreadful terror seiz'd
 The starting horses; and their lord, much train'd
 In all equestrian lore, in his strong hand
 Held firm the reins; like one that at the oar
 Bends backward, backward so he bent, and drew
 The straiten'd reins: champing their iron bits
 They rush impetuous on, nor guiding hand,
 Nor straiten'd rein, nor well-compacted car
 Regard: if to the level plain his wheels
 He guided, there, to force him back, the bull
 Appear'd before him, and the madd'ning steeds
 Affrighted; on the rough rocks if they rush'd
 With wild and frenetic flight, approaching nigh
 In silence he accompanied the car,
 Till dash'd against a crag the clashing wheel
 High bounding cast him headlong from his seat;
 All then was foul disorder; upward flew
 The pierc'd nave and the axle's point infix'd.
 Th' unhappy youth, inexplicably bound
 Amidst the tangling harness, 'gainst the rocks
 His dear head dash'd, his flesh all rent, was heard
 With lamentable voice t' address his steeds,
 Stop, O my coursers, mindful that these hands
 Have fed you in my stalls, destroy me not:
 How dreadful is my father's imprecation!
 Is no one nigh, no one to save a man

1293. Before you enter Epidaurus is the temple of Æsculapius, whose sacred inclosure is on every side surrounded with mountains: on one of these, called Pitthion, he was exposed when an infant. Pausan. Corinth. cap. xxvi. & xxvii.

Of unstain'd innocence? Though many wish'd,
 We were left far behind, and our best speed
 Was slow. He disengag'd, I know not how,
 From the rent harness falls, a little life
 Yet breathing: but the steeds were seen no more,
 Nor the potentous bull, I know not where
 Conceal'd among the crags that rise around.
 I in thy house am a poor slave, O king,
 Yet never shall my breast harbour the thought,
 Or be persuaded that thy son was base,
 Not though the universal race of women
 Should hang themselves, and every pine of Ida
 Were fill'd with letters, for I know him pure.

CHOR. Alas, alas, these new calamities
 Have their completion: there is no redress
 From fate, no refuge from necessity.

THES. So much I hate the wretch who suffer'd this,
 I had a pleasure in thy words; but now
 I reverence the gods, and him, because
 He was my son; I therefore from these ills
 Receive no pleasure, and receive no grief.

MESS. Not to offend thee, whither shall we bear
 Th' unhappy youth, what office shall we pay him?
 Yet, might my wish prevail, thou wilt not be
 Ungentle 'midst his sufferings to thy son.

THES. Bring him before me, I would see him; now,
 Since he disown'd the foul stain to my bed,
 My words shall charge his baseness home upon him,
 Convicted by this vengeance of the gods.

CHOR. 'Tis thine, O Venus, to control
 The stubborn and reluctant soul,
 And gods and men confess thy sway:
 Whilst proud his painted plumage to display
 Round, thy son, with nimble flight,
 Sportive waves his pennons light,
 Flies o'er the earth, and o'er the roaring main.
 Where'er the glitt'ring Wanton roves,
 He spreads the triumphs of his reign;

Spreads them the mountain savage o'er,
That soften'd growls his horrid loves;
Spreads them o'er all that haunt the woods,
Or gambol in the floods.
All, that the sun's bright beams display,
And man, imperial Venus, feel thy pow'r,
And homage to their sovereign pay.

DIANA, THESEUS, CHORUS.

DIA. Son of the noble Ægeus, I command thee
Hear me; the virgin daughter of Latona,
Diana, speaks to thee. Why, Theseus, why,
Unhappy, hast thou joy in these events?
Thy son not justly hast thou slain, deceiv'd
By thy wife's falsehood; dark the charge, but clear
Thy fatal loss: deep in the shades below
Wilt thou not hide, with shame depress'd, thy head;
Or take thee wings, and mount into the air
From this disastrous ruin? With good men
Never, thou never canst hold converse more.
Hear, Theseus, of what quality thy ills;
Not that my words to aught of good avail,
Yet they will grieve thee. But for this I came,
To shew thee that the spirit of thy son
Was just, and that he perish'd through his sense
Of honour; that thy wife was stung to madness,
Yet had it something generous; for, her heart
Inflamed by Venus, of the gods to me
Most hateful, and to virgin modesty,
She loved thy son; she tried t' o'ercome her love
By reason, but against her will betray'd
She chose to perish; for her wily nurse
Reveal'd her passion to the youth, but first
Bound him by oath; but he, to virtue firm,
Gave to her words no ear: and though by thee
Much wrong'd, through reverence to the gods his oath
He would not violate. She fear'd her shame
Would be divulg'd, which to prevent she wrote

'That fraudulent letter, won thy easy faith,
And by her forg'd device destroy'd thy son.

THES. Unhappy me!

DIA. Does it then gall thee, Theseus?

This is not all: be silent, and attend.

Well was it known to thee that three requests

Were by thy father ratified; of these

One, thou most vile of men, on thy son's head

Call'd vengeance, better for some foe reserv'd:

The monarch of the sea, though his intent

To thee was friendly, granted thy request,

As by his promise bound: he now must deem thee,

I too must deem thee, alienate from good;

For neither faith, nor augur's voice, nor proof

Didst thou await, nor give a little time

To thought, but with unseemly haste didst call

This vengeance on thy son, which hath destroy'd him

THES. O might I perish with him, virgin queen!

DIA. Things dreadful hast thou done, yet may they find

Forgiveness; for, her heart inflamed with rage,

So Venus will'd; and 'mongst the gods this law

Is firm; none wishes to oppose th' intent

Dear to another, but we always yield

Each to the other's will: else, be assured,

But, through my awe of Jove, this foul disgrace

I had not suffer'd, that of all the race

Of mortal men the dearest to my soul

I should permit to perish. But thy fault

Hath ignorance for its plea, and stands excused

From aught of malice; and thy wife by death

Cut off the proof of words, to win belief.

These evils then burst chiefly on thy head,

And grief on me: for when the righteous fall,

The gods rejoice not; but in ruin sink

The guilty, with their children and their house.

CHOR. But see he comes, th' unhappy youth, his flesh

And golden-tressed head, all rent. What grief

Hath its full measure here? A double woe
Sent by the gods hath seiz'd this mournful house.

DIANA, THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS,
CHORUS.

HIPP. O miserable me, how torn, how gash'd,
Th' effect of that injurious doom pronounc'd
By my injurious father. Wretched me,
I perish: through my head convulsive pains
Shoot fierce; my brain is rack'd—A little pause,
Soft, I would rest my harass'd limbs awhile.—
O that detested chariot, and ye steeds,
Fed by my hands, you have destroy'd me, kill'd me.—
O, by the gods I beg you, gently touch
My mangled body: that rude hand, whose is it?
It hurts my side: support me gently, lead,
With smooth and even motion lead along.
An hapless wretch, and by a father's error
Accurs'd. O Jove, dost thou behold these things?
My modesty, my reverence for the gods
Avail me not: the chastest of mankind
I lose my life, and in thy sight go down
To the dark realms of death: My pious toils
Benevolent to man avail me not.
Pain, pain now racks me; quit me, touch me not;
And let death come to give my miseries ease:
You torture me. O that I had a sword,
Whose piercing point might let out life, and lay me
At rest! Alas, my father's dreadful curse,
And you, my blood-polluted ancestors!
Your deeds of former times come forth, and all
Their vengeance falls on me: but why on me?
I had no share in those ill deeds. Ah me,
What can I say? How shall I free my life

1462. The Scholiast refers this to the death of the Pallantides; Mr. Heath with more judgment to the bloody house of Tantalus, to which Theseus was related through Pittheus the son of Pelops.

From these severe immedicable pains?
 O, would the black necessity of death
 And night compose a tortured wretch to rest!

DIA. Unhappy youth, in what calamity
 Involv'd! Thy generous mind hath ruin'd thee.

HIPP. Odours divine breathe round me: in my ills
 My sense is full of thee: it gives my pain
 Some respite. Is Diana in the house?

DIA. Near thee, poor youth, thy honour'd goddess stands.

HIPP. Secst thou, O queen, what miseries are mine?

DIA. I see: but from my eyes no tear must flow.

HIPP. Thy huntsman, thy attendant now no more.

DIA. No more, but perish'd by a cruel fate.

HIPP. Thy statues, and thy steeds no more my care.

DIA. The mischief-loving Venus plotted this.

HIPP. Ah me! I feel her pow'r: she hath undone me.

DIA. Her honour slighted by the chaste she deems.

HIPP. She, cruel goddess, hath destroy'd us three.

DIA. Thyself, thy father, and his hapless wife.

HIPP. Therefore I mourn my father's wretchedness.

DIA. He by the guileful goddess was deceiv'd.

HIPP. Alas, my father, what a woe is thine!

THES. It sinks me: life, my son, is irksome to me.

HIPP. More than myself thy error I deplore.

THES. Would I might die instead of thee, my son.

HIPP. How fatal are thy father Neptune's gifts!

THES. O that the wish had never pass'd my lips!

HIPP. If not, so great thy rage thou wou'dst have kill'd me.

THES. The gods had then deprived me of my sense.

HIPP. Ah, what a curse on mortals from the gods!

DIA. Forbear: this violent and cruel rage
 Of Venus, which hath crush'd thee for thy chaste
 And honest resolution, shall not sink
 In dark oblivion unreveng'd; it shall not:
 For of her minions one, whom her heart holds

1472. See note to the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, p. 12. l. 13.

1501. This is understood of Adonis.

The dearest of mankind, shall feel the vengeance,
 Th' inevitable vengeance of this bow.
 To thee, unhappy sufferer, for these ills
 High honours in Trœzene will I give.
 To thee the virgins, e'er their nuptial hour,
 Shall for a length of ages from their heads
 Sever their tresses, and with tears bewail
 Thy fate; to thee the melancholy song
 Their modest train shall raise; nor shall the love
 Of Phædra sink unmention'd and forgotten.
 Son of the aged Ægeus, in thine arms
 Take thou thy son, embrace him; for thy error
 Hath slain him, not thy will; and mortal man
 Must err when so the gods appoint. And thou,
 Hippolytus, forbear to hate thy father;
 For thus to perish was thy fate. But now
 Farewell: to see the dying or the dead
 Is not permitted me, it would pollute
 Mine eyes; and thou art near this fatal ill.

HIPP. And farewell thou: go, virgin, and be blest:
 Nor grieve that our long converse here hath end.
 My anger 'gainst my father is disarm'd
 At thy command, for thou hast ever found me
 Obedient to thy dictates. O'er mine eyes
 Darkness already comes: my father, take me,
 Take me, my father, and compose my limbs.

THES. Alas, my son, how wretched dost thou make me!

HIPP. I die: the gates of Pluto open to me.

THES. And leaving me inexpiably guilty?

HIPP. Not so, since I acquit thee of my death.

THES. What, dost thou free me from the charge of blood?

HIPP. Be witness, goddess of th' unerring bow.

THES. O my loved son, how generous to thy father!

HIPP. Thou too farewell, my father; be thou happy!

THES. How good, how pious is thy mind, my son!

HIPP. Be it thy wish t' obtain such true-born sons.

THES. Forsake me not, my son ; retain thy strength.

HIPP. No longer I retain my strength : I die :
But veil my face, now veil it with my vests.

THES. Ye realms of Pallas, ye illustrious tow'rs
Of Athens, what your loss, of such a man
Deprived ? O miserable me ! How oft
My memory, Venus, will recal thy ills !

CHOR. To all the citizens this common grief
Came unexpected, and with many tears
Will be bewail'd : for of the Great reports,
That merit sorrow, strike th' impression deep.

THE
PHOENICIAN VIRGINS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

JOCASTA

PHORBAS

ANTIGONE

POLYNICES

ETEOCLES

CREON

TIRESIAS

MENŒCEUS

ŒDIPUS

MESSENGERS

CHORUS OF PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

THE
PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

THE reader has here the fairest opportunity to judge of the comparative merit of Æschylus and Euripides, where the latter rivals his great master in that drama on which he most valued himself. It has been observed in the preface to *The Seven Chiefs against Thebes*, that “the judicious choice of the persons of the Chorus forms one of the principal graces of that tragedy, as it gave the poet an opportunity of mixing the natural timidity of the female character with the animated and fiery daring of heroes ; the fears of these daughters of Cadmus presenting nothing to their imagination but scenes of distress and horror, which the insolence of conquest spreads through a vanquished and plundered city, and this painted in the warmest colours, in the strongest style of Æschylus.” This no succeeding poet could hope to exceed, or even to equal : Euripides therefore has taken for his Chorus some Virgins brought from Phœnicia, the spoils of war, devoted to the service of Apollo at Delphi, but detained at Thebes by the invasion of the Argive army ; from these the tragedy takes its title. As the persons of these Virgins were sacred, their apprehensions were not so strongly alarmed ; and as they were strangers at Thebes, they could not be so deeply

concerned as natives, whose persons, lives, and fortunes, with all they held most dear, were in great and immediate danger : hence their part is less interesting, their odes are less pertinent and less animated, and the drama wants much of that distress and terror which agitates the Theban Virgins through the scenes of Æschylus.

One is sorry to find that the emulation of Euripides was not free from some stain of envy ; he obliquely censures Æschylus (see l. 835.) for taking up the time in describing the chiefs, when they ought to have been in action ; and to avoid this in his own scenes, he leads Antigone to a tower, from whence she has a view of the Argive army and its leaders : here the poet had an opportunity and leisure to display all the powers of his imagination ; but we are disappointed ; he shrinks before the superior genius of Æschylus. This scene is an imitation of the third Iliad, where Helen points out and describes the Grecian leaders to Priam : P. Brumoy calls it une imitation très-heureuse, and says that Euripides has happily improved upon his original ; for as Homer only relates, the tragic poet makes his persons act ; but Homer is not so easily excelled ; he was too nice an observer of propriety to represent his heroes in action at a time when they had nothing to do ; yet Ulysses, consistently with the wisdom and vigilance of his character, is moving from rank to rank, and inspecting his men. Euripides indeed is happy in softening this view of arms and war with the affectionate tenderness of Antigone at the sight of her brother ; this beauty is peculiarly his own, and constitutes the chief grace of the scene ; we are sorry that it is closed with a reflection not to be pardoned even to a man, who perhaps was not happy in his own do-

mestic connexions, and who was no stranger to the shrill-tongued wife of Socrates. But Æschylus is unjustly censured for delaying the time in describing the chiefs when they ought to have been in action: it was necessary that Eteocles should be well informed what Argive prince assumed his station at each gate, that he might know what Theban chief to oppose against him; and it is but candid to consider him as a commander receiving intelligence, and giving his orders to an officer, who goes to execute them, whilst he himself is arming for the battle; were it not so, the reader of taste would rather be indulgent to some little impropriety, than give up the boldest descriptions that ever animated poetry. But is Euripides himself free from the fault which he here censures in Æschylus? Should the messenger, who tells Jocasta that her sons were arming for a single combat, have deferred his important information till he had given a long and circumstantial account of the attack and repulse of the Argives? The lives of her sons, her own life, and the welfare of all the unhappy house of Œdipus, depended on her immediate interposition to prevent this combat; and no narrative, however interesting on other accounts, could justify the delay: this impropriety is the more unpardonable, as it might have been prevented by a little management of the poet.

Candour now and justice require us to point out the excellence of Euripides, and the improvements he has made upon the simple plan of Æschylus: these are considerable. To the Persons of the Drama he hath added Jocasta, Polynices, Creon, Tiresias, Menœceus, and Œdipus; and no writer supports his characters with more propriety: this enlargement of his plan enabled him to enrich his play with incidents, which are

chosen with great judgment. The reader will be pleased with the maternal affection and solid reasoning of Jocasta ; he will acknowledge the interview of the brothers to be well conducted, and their characters nicely distinguished ; he will admire the glorious resolution of Menœceus, and be touched with the manly sorrow and firm dignity of the injured and unhappy Œdipus : but nothing can be more affecting than the tender lamentations, the noble yet feminine spirit, and the filial piety of Antigone. Æschylus is always sublime ; his conceptions are great, and expressed with inimitable force and fire : no man ever succeeded so well in raising terror. The genius of Euripides is less ardent, but this is compensated by a tender and feeling heart ; to this he always gives way ; and never fails to raise those sadly sweet emotions of sympathetic sorrow, of which he himself was so sensible : no man ever succeeded so well in raising pity.

P. Brumoy seems inclined to censure the part of Menœceus as episodical, and subordinate to the action of the drama : he says, with his usual good sense, that the Greek poets rarely admitted these episodes, as being contrary to the effect of the principal action, and turning aside, at least dividing, the attention of the spectator. But it is not so here ; in ancient Greece few important actions were carried on without oracles, sacrifices, and expiations ; and the sacred dragon held so great a share in the history of Thebes, that the Poet had reason to make this atonement for the slaughter of him ; so that the sacrifices of Menœceus was a proper part of the principal action. Brumoy was so well acquainted with ancient customs and manners, that this could not escape him ; but the truth was this, he gave his view of the Greek theatre with the laudable inten-

tion of reforming the taste of his countrymen, and to bring them back to the beautiful simplicity of the ancients ; the critic was well qualified for his task, but the taste of the age was against him ; and to gain an hearing, he was obliged to manage a little, and throw back some of his censure on the ancients, by which means it was softened, and in some sort brought its excuse with it when applied to his cotemporaries ; this we may collect from his concluding words, *Après tout celui d'Euripide, quoiqu'un peu tiré, justifieroit ceux de nos jours, si on ne les poussoit pas plus loin qu'il ne l'a fait, et si on ne les faisoit rouler presque toujours sur l'amour.* Though the state of the French theatre warranted this general reflection, yet we may suppose that the critic particularly glanced at the love-scenes in *Les Freres Ennemis* of Racine : but as the author requests indulgence for that piece, as being written in his early youth, not to grant it to the merit of his riper years would be uncandid. Seneca also wrote a tragedy on this subject ; mutilated as it is, enough remains to shew us the bad taste of that outrageous and unnatural writer ; his extravagance deserves no pardon.

So much is said in this tragedy of the Theban Dragon, that the English reader may not be displeased with an account of a few of these enormous monsters, just to shew him what idea the ancients had of their prodigious size. This is described by Ovid with all the luxuriance of his vivid imagination : the Delphic Python and the Lernean Hydra are well known ; this latter is here sculptured in the shield of Adrastus as having an hundred heads, and holding a Theban in each of its hundred jaws. The horrid Dragon, that guarded the Golden Fleece, in length and bulk exceeded a ship of fifty oars : Pindar, *Pyth. Ode iv.* Such

also was the wakeful keeper of the garden of the Hesperides. Statius, who was not of a genius to let any thing vast escape him, has given a very spirited description of an immense serpent, Thebaid. v.

Sublime on radiant spires he glides along,
 And brandishes by fits his triple tongue,
 An hideous length of tail behind he draws,
 And foamy venom issues from his jaws.
 Three rows of teeth his mouth expanded shews,
 And from his crest terrific glories rose.——
 One while he rolls his curling volumes round
 The sylvan fane, or ploughs the furrow'd ground;
 Then round an oak his scaly length he twines,
 And breaks in his embrace the toughest pines:
 From bank to bank extended oft he lies,
 Cut by his scales the waves high bubbling rise.

LEWIS.

Nor is this merely the amplification of poetry. Diodorus Siculus, l. 3. tells us, that the Ethiopians, who dwell near their wild and savage deserts, affirm that they have seen serpents of an hundred cubits in length; and that when in the plains the largest of these roll themselves round, spire upon spire, they have at a distance the appearance of hills. One of these some hunters of the second Ptolemy found means to take alive, and carried it to Alexandria; but this was only thirty cubits long: when he was first attacked, the hunters were struck with terror as they beheld his fiery eyes, his vibrating tongue, the roughness of his scales rattling over the wood that bent beneath him, the immense greatness of his teeth, the dreadful gaping of his jaws, and the astonishing height of his rising spires: in their fright they threw their net short; it fell upon his tail; at the touch the monster twisted himself round with horrible hissings, and rising above the

head of the man nearest to him, seized him with his jaws, and devoured him alive ; another at a greater distance he entangled in the spire of his tail, and drew to him ; the others fled : yet in expectation of the favour and liberality of the king, who was fond of collecting strange animals, they attempted him a second time by stratagem, and succeeded : hunger subdued his fierceness, and Ptolemy kept him tame as a wonderful sight to all strangers that came to Alexandria. Even the sober dignity of Roman history has recorded a serpent of an amazing size which infested the camp of Regulus at Bagrada ; this they attacked with the engines then used to batter towns ; it was an hundred and twenty feet long ; Regulus sent its skin and jaws to Rome, where it remained an hundred and fifteen years hung up in a temple. These accounts, the reader may say, are drawn from fabulous antiquity ; but they are exceeded by a modern and right reverend writer ; Pontoppidan, in his natural history of Norway, gives an account of a snake in the deep northern sea six hundred feet long, which rises so high out of the water, that its head reaches above a ship's main top ;

—————his other parts besides

Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lie floating many a rood.

The Scene is in the court before the royal Palace at Thebes.

THE
PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

JOCASTA.

O THOU, that whirling 'midst the stars of heaven
Thy radiant course, and on thy golden car
High-seated, glorying in thy fiery steeds,
Rollest the orient light, resplendent Sun,
How inauspicious didst thou dart thy beams
That day on Thebes, when from the sea-wash'd coast
Of fair Phœnicia Cadmus on this land
Set his ill-omen'd foot! Yet to his arms
The queen of love consign'd her beauteous daughter
Harmonia; and from her, to crown his joys,
Sprung Polydorus; Labdacus from him
Derived his birth; the father he of Laius.
Mencæcus was my sire, and from one mother
Creon my brother: me my father named
Jocasta, and to Laius wedded me.
Year after year roll'd on, our nuptial bed
Yet childless, when to Phœbus he his way
Enquiring took, and of the god requests
The sweet society of a son to cheer
His house: the oracle replied, "O king
"Of warlike Thebes, sow not, the gods averse,
"For such a fatal harvest: should a son
"Spring up, that son shall kill thee, and thine house
"Shall sink in blood." Yet one night in his wine
He yielded to his pleasure, and a son
From thence arose: but conscious of his fault

Offending 'gainst th' oracular voice, that son
He to his herdsmen gave in charge t' expose him
In the rich meads of Juno, where Cithæron
O'ershades the vale, and with sharp-pointed steel
Bored through his legs; hence Greece gave him the name
Of Œdipus. Him there the wand'ring grooms,
That watch'd the grazing steeds of Polybus,
Took up, and to their royal mistress bore:
She cherish'd at her breast the child, that cost me
A mother's throes, and works upon her lord
To deem it hers. When now the blooming down
Spoke manhood in my son, by instinct moved,
Or some report, t' Apollo's shrine he went
Ardent to know his parents: at that time
To the same shrine went Laius, to enquire,
If haply he might learn, what fate attended
His exposed child: at Phocis, where the road
Divides itself, they met; the charioteer
Of Laius sternly bids him quit the way,
Yielding to kings; he silent moved and slow,
Greatly indignant; but the rushing steeds
Rent with their trampling hoofs his bleeding feet:
At this, (but why relate each circumstance
Of bloody action distant far?) the son
There kills the father, and to Polybus
In triumph sends the chariot. Now the Sphinx
Prey'd with a vulture's talons on the city.
My husband now no more, my brother Creon
Proclaim'd to him, whose deep thought should unfold
The subtle monster's intricate enigma,
My bed the prize: chance then brought Œdipus,
My son; the Sphinx's riddle he explain'd;
And as the monarch of this land assumes
The sceptre, his just meed; and marries me
His mother, hapless he, and knew it not;
Nor did she know that her son shared her bed.
I to my child bore children; two brave sons,
Eteocles, and the illustrious worth

Of Polynices; and two daughters, one
Her father call'd Ismene, but the elder
I named Antigone. But when he knew,
Much-suffering Œdipus, that sharing mine
He shared his mother's bed, in grief, in rage,
He did a deed of desperate horror, rent
His eyes, and with his golden buckles bored
Their bleeding orbs.. When now the manly down
Began to darken on their cheeks, his sons
In secret shut him, from the eyes of men
Immured, that the sad memory of his fortune.
Which needed much the best plann'd policy,
Might wear away: yet in the house he lives,
With most unhallow'd execrations cursing
His sons, that with the sword's sharp edge his house
Their mutual hate may share. They fearing this,
Fearing the gods might execute this curse,
Should they reside beneath one roof, agreed
In friendly compact that my Polynices,
The younger, should a willing exile go
Leaving this land, and to Eteocles
Consign the throne, till the revolving year
With grateful interchange should call him back.
Th' imperial seat he quits not, but with scorn
Drives Polynices out to banishment;
Who flies to Argos, and accepting there
Th' alliance of Adrastus, drew to arms
An host of Argives, who with many a shield
Form the firm phalanx round their chief, and march
To the sev'n gates of Thebes: before these walls
His father's sceptre he demands, his share
Of empire. To prevent this dreadful contest
I wrought my son, e'er his hand grasp the spear
Confiding in a truce to enter Thebes,
Brother with brother holding conference:
Gentle his answer; soon he will be here.
O thou, that in shining clouds of heaven
Dwellest enthroned, all-pow'rful Jove, preserve us,

Dispose my sons to peace; well it becomes
 Thy wisdom, nor on one devoted head
 To pour th' unceasing storm of wretchedness!

PHORBAS, ANTIGONE.

- PHOR. Pride of thy father's house, sweet-breathing flower,
 Since, with leave granted, thou hast left th' apartments,
 Where virgin modesty retires to shun
 The gaze of men, and to this tow'r approachest
 Anxious to view the Argive troops beneath,
 Yet stay thy steps, Antigone; mine eye
 Shall first explore the pass; haply some Theban
 May be in sight, and with opprobrious taunts
 Revile me as a slave, nor spare e'en thee
 Of royal birth: this caution had, my tongue
 Shall tell thee all, whate'er I saw, or heard
 From th' Argives, to thy brother when I bore
 The offer of a truce, and thence return'd.
 But nigh this house no Theban is in sight;
 Come then, ascend this height, let thy foot tread
 These stairs of ancient cedar; thence survey
 The plains beneath; see what an host of foes
 At Dirce's fount encamp, and stretch along
 The valley where Ismenus rolls his stream.
- ANT. Stretch forth thy hand, thy aged hand: support
 My youth, assist me whilst I mount this height.
- PHOR. Lean on my hand: in lucky hour thou comest:
 In motion is the wide Pelasgian host,
 Each wheeling phalanx forming round its chief.
- ANT. Awful Diana, virgin goddess, see
 The field all brass glares like the lightning's blaze.
- PHOR. Not tamely Polynices to this land
 Returns, but raging leads a numerous host,
 Horsemen, and deep'ning ranks of foot in arms.
- ANT. Are the gates closed, fasten'd with bars of brass
 To the strong bulwarks by Amphion rais'd
 Of rock impregnable?
- PHOR. Be confident;

Within the city is secure: but view
That chief, if thy desire to know excite thee.

ANT. Who is that chief, o'er whose bright helmet waves
The snowy plume, as marshalling the van
He moves, and on his arm his brazen shield
Lifts lightly? Whence his race, and what his name?

PHOR. That warrior chief from rich Mycenæ boasts
His race, and near the fount of Lerna fixed
His royal seat, the king Hippomedon.

ANT. With what an haughty port he moves, to sight
How dreadful, tow'ring like an earth-born giant!
Blazing amidst his starry arms he seems
Far other than the race of mortal men.

PHOR. Seest thou that chief now passing o'er the stream
Of Dirce!

ANT. Different he, of different guise
His aims. Who is the warrior!

PHOR. Tydeus he,
The son of Œneus: in his breast he bears
Th' Ætolian Mars.

ANT. Is this the prince, who made
The sister of my brother's royal bride
His nuptial choice? How different are his arms,
And of barbaric mixture?

PHOR. Fierce in fight

149. Ἀστρωπὸς ἐν γραφαῖσι, v. 131. This alludes to the figure of Argus engraved on his shield. See v. 1122. of the original, and l. 1250. of the translation. So Valckenaer and Dr. Musgrave explain it.

158. Antigone had observed that the arms of Tydeus were in part barbaric; and her experienced attendant allows the justness of her observation, telling her that all the Ætolians carry the shield and hurl the spear: as these weapons of offence and defence were common to all the Greeks, the difference could only be in the form. The words, which Euripides here uses, are *σάκος* and *λόγχη*, the precise meaning of which we must endeavour to find. Homer indeed makes use of *σάκος* and *ἀσπίς* indiscriminately; the shield of Paris is *σάκος μέγα τε σιδερόν τε*, and soon after the spear of Menelaus strikes *κατ' ἀσπίδα πάντοσιν ἴσθην*, for the Grecian shield was round, and *εὐκυκλος* the general epithet of *ἀσπίς*; hence Virgil speaks of the eye of Polyphmus as

Argolici clypei, aut Phœbeæ lampadis instar.

Like the Sun's disk, or like a Grecian shield.—DRYDEN.

Th' Ætolian warriors lift the long square targe,
And hurl with certain aim the flying lance.

ANT. Say whence this perfect knowledge.

PHOR. To yon camp

Sent with the offer of a truce I mark'd
The impress of each shield; these now I see,
And by them recognize each martial chief.

ANT. What leader he, that marches by the tomb
Of Zethus? O'er his eyes of gorgon glare
His locks hang clust'ring: Ah, what numbers, clad
In complete arms attend the dreadless youth!

PHOR. Parthenopæus this, th' illustrious son
Of Atalanta.

ANT. May Diana's shafts,
Who o'er the mountains with his mother leads
The chase, extend him breathless on the plain,
That comes in arms to lay my country waste.

PHOR. Be thy vows heard: but Justice leads their march;
And much I fear the gods with righteous eyes
Regard their cause.

But Euripides here uses the word *σάκος* in *σакисφόροι* in its precise and proper sense as a barbaric shield of a figure different from the Grecian *ἀσπίς*, perhaps like that which sculptors have generally given to Mezentius; with the same precision Homer calls this hero *σακίσσαυλος ἱππότα Τυδείης*. Didymus says that this shield was called *σάκος* from the *Sacæ*, a people of Thrace, who first formed it. The spear was a common weapon, and in the hand of every warrior of old times, but not uniformly of the same size and use: in Homer the combatants generally threw their spears, measuring the distance by their strength;

Ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἀμπέπαλων προῖτι δολιχόσκιον ἔγχος

is said of almost every hero, except the Abantes, who are celebrated for that

Their hands dismiss not the long lance in air;
But with protended spears in fighting fields
Pierce the tough cors'lets, and the brazens shields.—POPE.

This protended spear, *ὄριστὴ μέλιη*, is the weapon with which Euripides aims the contending brothers, who use it in close fight till it is broken in the hand of each: the missive javelin, the barbaric *λόγχη*, was in use only among the troops of Tydeus, who in the attack on the town drove the Thebans from the walls *Αἰτωλίσιν λόγχαισιν ἀκοντίζοντες*, hurling their Ætolian spears to the battlements.

- ANT. But where, ah, where is he,
Whom with a rugged fate one mother bore
With me? where is my Polynices, tell me.
- PHOR. He near the tomb, where Niobe interr'd
Her seven slain virgin daughters, stands in arms
Associate with Adrastus. Dost thou see him?
- ANT. I see him, yes, but indistinctly; see
Distant what wears the semblance of his form.
O could I, like a nimble-moving cloud, -
Fly through the air, borne on the winged winds,
Fly to my brother; I would throw my arms
Round his dear neck, unhappy youth, so long
An exile. Mark him, good old man, O mark
How graceful in his golden arms he stands,
And glitters like the bright sun's orient rays.
- PHOR. The truce will bring him hither; in this house
His presence soon will fill thy soul with joy.
- ANT. But what is he, high-seated in his car,
Ruling his milk-white coursers; whence the chief?
- PHOR. Amphiaræus, who foretells the fates,
As bleeding on the earth the victims lie.
- ANT. O daughter of the glitt'ring-cinctur'd Sun,
Thou golden-circled light, fair Moon, how calm,
With what a sober dignity he guides
His steeds! But where is he, whose dreadful threats
Insult the city, the proud Capaneus.
- PHOR. Rolling his eager eye to each access
Of the seven gates, see how he scans the walls,
From their foundation to the battlements
Nothing their height.
- ANT. O ye deep-roaring thunders
Of Jove, ye livid lightnings' blasting flames,
Vengeance, 'tis thine to quell his arrogance!
Shall he to proud Mycenæ, and the fount -
Of Lerna gushing from the trident's stroke,
To Amymone's banks, Neptunian stream,
In slavery lead th' unhappy dames of Thebes
The captives of his spear? Never, ah! never,

Daughter of Jove, revered Diana, thou
That braid'st with gold thy tresses, may I live
To suffer slavery !

PHOR.

Go, my child, retire
To thy apartments, there remain, thine eyes
Have been indulged with what they wish'd to see.
For, as the storm of war rolls near the town,
A troop of females to this royal house
Advances; and that sex hath nature form'd
Prone to complain; if once they take th' occasion,
Small though it be, to give their words a vent,
Another, and another still is added;
And 'tis their pleasure 'mongst themselves to speak
Nothing that owns the pow'r of moderation.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Bounding o'er the Tyrian flood
 From Phœnicia's sea-girt isle,
 Hallow'd to the Delphic god,
 I come, the first-fruits of the spoil;
Destin'd to dwell, attendant at his shrine,
 Where cover'd with eternal snow
 Parnassus lifts his forked brow:
Our oars brush'd lightly o'er th' Ionian brine,
 Along Cilicia's wave-wash'd strand,
 A wide wild waste of barren sand;
Whilst the mild Zephyr through the liquid skies
 Whispers pleasure as he flies.

ANTIS. 1. Cull'd from Tyre, its brightest grace,
 Worthy of the god, I came
 To Agenor's high-born race,
 Glorying, Cadmus, in thy name,
To kindred tow'rs where sceptred Laius reign'd;
 Nor will the god more precious hold
 The sculptur'd forms that breathe in gold.
Yet thus far have these walls my zeal detain'd;
 As yet Castalia's silver wave
 These flowing tresses waits to lave,

Delicious stream, where bathes the virgin train,
Serving at Apollo's fane.

EPOD. Thou rock irradiate with the sacred flame,
That blazing on thy awful brow
Seems double to the vale below !
Thou kindred cliff, on whose rude height
To Bacchus swells the tow'ring shrine ;
Whose crags among, a wond'rous sight,
Glow's the daily-ripening vine,
And fills the goblet with its nectar'd stream !
Ye caves, beneath whose horrid shade
His bulk the Delphic Dragon laid !
Ye mountain watch-tow'rs of the gods,
Whose steeps with snows eternal crown'd
The virgin train encompass round,
O take me to your bless'd abodes ;
And far from Dirce's troubled waves
Protect me, Phœbus, in thy hallow'd caves !

STRO. 2. Now th' impetuous god of war
Shakes these walls with loud alarms ;
And his squadrons leading near
Fires their blood, and shouts to arms ;
Ah, be their fury 'gainst these bulwarks vain !
For touch'd with pity's social glow
Friend shares with friend the common woe ;
And sad Phœnicia, should misfortune's train
Around these seven-tow'r'd rampires spread,
Would bow with friendly grief her head ;
From Iö boasting each their high descent,
I the woes of each lament.

ANTIS. 2. Now the thund'ring storm of war
Rolls along these groaning fields ;

252. So the Scholiast well explains it. The fire was on that head of Parnassus which was sacred to Apollo and Diana ; to those below it appeared double, being divided to the eye by a pointed rock which rose before it.

259. The Python.

276. Libye the daughter of Epaphus bore to Neptune Agenor and Belus : Cadmus was the son of Agenor, and Antiope the daughter of Beius.

Now with fierce terrific glare
 Blaze around the fiery shields,
 Portending carnage red with gushing gore :
 And Mars in all his ruthless pride,
 With rage and horror at his side,
 Bids on this royal house the ruin roar.
 Pelasgian Argos, how I fear
 The fury of thy vengeful spear ;
 For the brave youth the sword of justice draws,
 And the gods assert his cause.

POLYNICES, CHORUS.

- POL. These guarded gates turn'd on their easy hinges
 T' admit my entrance; caught within the net,
 Not without blood, I fear, to yield me passage
 Returning: each way therefore let me roll
 My cautious eye, lest treachery steal upon me.
 But with this good sword arm'd my hand shall work
 My safety with brave daring.—Ha ! Who's this !—
 What, does a noise appal me?—To th' advent'rous
 All things cause terror, when on hostile ground
 He sets his foot. Confiding in my mother,
 And scarce confiding hither am I come
 Beneath the sanction of a truce. But see
 Protection nigh, the blazing altars here,
 And houses not forsaken: come, my sword,
 Rest in thy sheath; and let me question these,
 Whoe'er they are, that stand before the palace.
 Ye female strangers, tell me, from what country
 Advance you to the houses of our Greece?
- CHOR. Phœnicia is my country, gave me birth,
 And nurtured me, till captive by the spear,
 Selected from the virgin train, the sons
 Of Cadmus led me hither, to Apollo
 An hallow'd off'ring. Whilst th' illustrious house
 Of Œdipus prepared that I attend
 The awful shrine and altars of the god,
 Th' embattled Argives march'd against the city.

Now tell me who thou art, that thou hast enter'd
The seven-tow'r'd rampires of the Theban land.

POL. My sire is Œdipus the son of Laius;
Jocasta, daughter of Menœceus, bore me;
Thebes knows me by the name of Polynices.

CHOR. O thou, whose high blood to Agenor's sons,
My lords that led me hither, is allied,
Thus lowly at thy knees, O king, I fall,
Holding my country's custom. Art thou come,
After this length of absence art thou come
To thy paternal land!—What, ho! come forth
Thou venerable dame, open thy doors:
I call thee to thy son: dost thou not hear?
Why this delay to quit thy lofty mansion?
Haste, come, and in thy fond arms clasp thy son.

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, CHORUS.

JOC. Hearing, ye virgins, your Phœnician voice
Within the house, I hither drag my steps
Feeble with trembling age.—My son, my son,
After this length of time, this tedious absence,
Do I behold thy face? Ah! fold thine arms
Around me, clasp me to thy bosom, lean
Thy cheek 'gainst my fond cheek, and shade my breast
With the dark ringlets of thy clust'ring hair.
Can I believe I hold thee in my arms
Unlook'd for thus, so much beyond my hopes?
What shall I say to thee? How tell thee all?
To touch thee thus, to hear thy voice, is joy,
Is transport; and my throbbing heart once more
Feels its old raptures. O my son, my son,
Long hast thou left thy father's house forsaken,
Forced into exile by thy brother's fault.
How have thy friends, and how hath Thebes wish'd for thee!
With many a mournful cry my hoary locks
For thee I clipt away, for thee threw off
My splendid robes, and chang'd them for these weeds,
This sable dress of grief. Within the house,

His eyes extinct, the poor old man still mourns
 With many a tear, with many an ardent wish,
 The discord of the brothers; and his grief
 Swelling to madness arm'd his hand to strike
 At his own life, bewailing his rash curses
 Utter'd against his sons, with sighs and groans
 In solitary darkness lies conceal'd.

For thee, my son, the nuptial bed, I hear,
 Rais'd in a foreign house, gives thee the joys
 Of love, and fondly to a foreign stem
 Allies thee: to a mother grievous this,
 Grievous to high-born Laius, this disgrace
 To be allied to strangers: nor did I
 Light, as our country's rites require, the torch
 'T' attend thy nuptials, office well beseeching
 An happy mother; his unconscionable stream
 Ismenus roll'd, and his delicious wave
 Fill'd not the bridal bath: through silent Thebes
 No voice of joy hail'd, as she pass'd along,
 Thy ent'ring bride. Be these ill omens vain!
 Whether the sword, or discord, or thy father
 Be the sad cause, or Ate in the house
 Of Œdipus her horrid orgies holds.

On me with all their weight these sorrows fall.

CHOR. Strong are the pangs of child-birth, yet each mother
 Glows with a warm affection to her children.

POI. With confidence, though mix'd with some distrust,
 I set my foot amongst my foes: such love
 Our country claims perforce: whoe'er suggests
 A different argument, may please himself
 With empty words, but his sad heart is there.
 Yet so far troubled thoughts prose, and fear
 Lest treachery from my brother should attempt
 My life, that as I pass'd I grasp'd my sword,
 And each way roll'd mine eye; yet did the truce
 Assure me, and thy faith, which hath induced me
 To enter thus this fortress of my fathers.
 The tears gush forth as after this long absence

I view these roofs, the altars of the gods,
 The circus where my active youth first learn'd
 Its martial exercise, and Dirce's stream;
 From these unjustly exiled I seek refuge
 'Midst strangers in a foreign state, whilst tears
 Incessant dew my cheeks. But to my griefs
 This grief is added, thus to see thy head
 Shorn of its honour'd locks, these sable weeds,
 The garb of mourning: Ah, my miseries!
 When discord rages in the house of friends,
 How dreadful, how implacable the strife!
 But of my father tell me, whose sad age
 Sits darkling in the house; of my two sisters
 Tell me; unhappy, mourn they yet my exile?
 JOC. Some vengeful god pours ruin on the race
 Of Œdipus, e'er since thy luckless birth,
 And my unholy nuptials with thy father,
 Who gave thee being. But of this no more:
 Whate'er the gods ordain, 'tis ours to bear.
 Much would I ask; but how? I fear t' offend
 The feelings of thy mind, for thou art come
 Indulging my fond wish.

POL. Without reserve
 Be thy enquiries; for to me thy will
 Is ever dear.

JOC. This first then would I know;
 Is exile from our country a great ill?

POL. The greatest: more in deed than words can speak.

JOC. Whence this? What gives such harshness to the ill?

POL. The greatest this, it curbs th' ingenuous tongue.

JOC. Who dares not speak his free thoughts is a slave.

POL. The follies of the pow'rful must be borne.

JOC. To be unwise with the unwise is painful.

POL. To interest he must bend, and be a slave.

JOC. But Hope, they say, supports the exile's soul.

POL. Her looks are gracious, but her steps are slow.

JOC. Hath time discover'd that her smiles are false?

POL. The sweetest, most attracting charms are in them.

- JOC. Whence, e'er obtain'd by marriage, hadst thou food?
 POL. One day had its supplies, another not.
 JOC. Thy father's friends, were they not courteous to thee?
 POL. In prosperous days friends swarm, in adverse vanish.
 JOC. Did not thy noble birth to greatness raise thee?
 POL. To want is wretched; high birth fed me not.
 JOC. Our country then must be most dear to us.
 POL. I have not pow'r of words to say how dear.
 JOC. But what to Argos led thee? What thy view?
 POL. The oracle of Phœbus warn'd Adrastus,
 JOC. What wou'dst thou say? Tell me: I have not heard it.
 POL. To wed his daughters to a Boar and Lion.
 JOC. What semblance hadst thou of these savages?
 POL. I know not: by the gods call'd to this fortune.
 JOC. The god is wise. But how obtain these nuptials?
 POL. 'Twas night: I reach'd the portal of Adrastus.
 JOC. In search of lodging, as a wand'ring exile?
 POL. E'en so: and then another exile came.
 JOC. Another, who? And was he wretched too?
 POL. Tydeus: whom fame reports the son of CENEUS.
 JOC. In what to Boar or Lion were ye like?
 POL. In contest fierce as theirs for space to lodge.
 JOC. And did Adrastus think the oracle
 In this accomplish'd?
 POL. And in marriage gave us
 His daughters blooming in the charms of youth.

447. Statius relates this adventure with his usual spirit. Polynices, wandering in a dark and tempestuous night, at length beheld the lights gleaming from Larissa, the citadel of Argos: he hastens thither, and entering the vestibule of the palace, throws himself on the floor to repose his limbs, stiff with the rain and wind. It happened that Tydeus (then an exile from Calydon for the unhappy murder of his brother) was driven by the same storm to the same place for shelter: a quarrel immediately ensued between the two princes; they fought; till Adrastus, disturbed by their clamours, came forth with many torches, and put an end to the fray: he hospitably received them into his house, where observing that Polynices wore on his shoulders a lion's hide, as Tydeus was covered with the skin of the Caledonian boar, he concluded that the oracle was accomplished in their arrival;

Cui Phœbus generos ævo ducente canebat

Setigerumque suum, et fulvum adventare leonem. Thebaid. l. 1.

JOC. Art thou then happy in the nuptial state?

POL. I never, to this day, had cause to blame it.

JOC. How hast thou wrought with all these troops in arms
T' attend thee hither?

POL. To each son his faith

Adrastus pledg'd, to Tydeus and to me,
My bridal day was his, and with an oath
Confirm'd it, to replace us in our country,
Me first: hence many chiefs unite in arms
From Argos and Mycenæ, rendering me
A needful but a melancholy service.

That to these walls I lead my warring troops,
I call the gods to witness how reluctant
I lift my spear against my much-loved parents.
But now with thee it rests to end these ills,
To close again the broken links of love
'Twixt jarring brothers, to my toils give rest,
To thine, and to thy country's. Oft of old
Hath this been said, let me repeat the same,
"Rich havings win respect, and bring to men
"The greatest pow'r:" and therefore am I come
With many a ported spear: the noblest blood,
If chill'd with want, boasts its high fount in vain.

CHOR. See, to the mediation of this peace
Eteocles comes: be it thy care, Jocasta,
Well it becomes a mother, to speak words
Whose soothing charms may reconcile thy sons.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA,
CHORUS.

ETEO. Well, mother, I am here, this grace to thee
Conceding: what is to be done? Some one
Begin the conference: for the walls around
My squadrons marshall'd and well harness'd cars,
I check them, till from thee I learn the terms
Of amity, for which thou hast receiv'd him
Within these walls, with leave from me obtain'd.

JOC. Restrain thy heat: the hasty spirit errs

From justice: slow-form'd counsels perfect wisdom.
Repress that fiery eye, and those fierce thoughts:
'Tis not the Gorgon's head thou here beholdest,
It is thy brother that revisits us.
And thou, my Polynices, turn thy face,
Look on thy brother; better wilt thou speak,
Eye fix'd on eye, and better he receive
Thy words. O that my voice might counsel you
To gentler reason! When a friend incens'd
Against a friend met face to face holds parle,
The end, for which they meet, should be regarded
Solely, no mention made of grievance past.
My Polynices, be thy words first heard,
For thou art come, leading the troops of Argos,
For injuries done thee: such thy plea: betwixt you
Some god be umpire, and accord your strife.
POL. The words of truth are simple; justice needs not
The circling train of wily argument,
Clear in its proofs. Injustice, in itself
Unsound, requires this medicinal trick
Of glozing sophistry. For me, my care
To save the honour of my father's house,
My own, and his, my wish t' avert the curse
Which Œdipus denounc'd against his sons,
Led me to leave this land, a willing exile,
And give him for one rolling year to rule
His country; then return to take my share
Of regal pow'r; not with discordant hate
And slaughter to achieve outrageous deeds,
Or suffer them, though this hath been my fate.
He gave assent, and with a sacred oath
Call'd the just gods to witness: yet his faith
In nothing kept, but holds perforce the pow'r,
And my part of this regal seat. Yet I,
Receiving my just right, am not averse
To send these pow'rs away, in mine own house
To hold my state the stipulated time,
Then peaceful yield it to his rule again.

I have no wish to desolate my country,
 Nor fix the firm machines to mount these walls.
 My right refus'd, with arms will I assert
 My cause, and to the gods make my appeal.
 My faith hath been held sacred, but to me
 Foul wrong is done, and by unrighteous force
 Am I driv'n forth an exile from my country.
 This is my plea, without collected proof
 Of circumstance, but just and clear to all,
 Wise or unwise: so seems it to my thoughts.

CHOR. And to my thought, though not in Greece were form'd
 Our infant minds, thou seem'st to speak with prudence.

ETEO. Of honour and of wisdom if alike
 All judg'd, nor contest, nor debate would rise
 'Mongst men: but 'tis not so: the names they use
 In common: but each gives his sense to them.
 My sense of them I freely shall avow.
 For honour I would mount above the stars,
 Above the sun's high course, or sink beneath
 Earth's deepest centre, might I so obtain
 This idol of my soul, this worshipp'd pow'r
 Of royalty; and never to another
 Would I resign her, but myself enjoy

540. As the ancients were of opinion that not only the infernal regions, but even the celestial habitations, were accessible to mortals, and their poetic history recorded many that had been admitted to the seats of the gods, who assigned kingdoms and empires at their sovereign will, this speech of Eteocles probably did not carry much extravagance to an Athenian audience, as it was softened by popular belief. But when Hotspur says,

By heav'n, methinks it were an easy leap
 To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;
 Or drive into the bottom of the deep,
 Where fadom-line could never touch the ground,
 And pluck up drowned honour by the locks;
 So he, that doth redeem her thence, might wear
 Without co-rival all her dignities.

we can consider this only as the effervescence of an heated imagination swelling with extravagant conceptions: so we are taught to receive it by the remarks of Northumberland and Worcester; and we forgive it to the wild greatness of the character.

The splendid dignity : to give up greatness,
 For low rank ill exchang'd, were base indeed.
 And shame forbids that he, who comes in arms
 Spreading o'er these rich realms the waste of war,
 Should his rude will enjoy : and Thebes would blush
 At my dishonour, should I shrink through dread
 Of th' Argive spear, and to his hand resign
 My sceptre. Seeks he to be reconciled?
 This arms effect not : friendly speech does all
 The hostile sword could do. On other terms
 Would he inhabit here : it is allow'd him :
 This grace, though much unwilling, shall I grant.
 A kingdom in my grasp, shall I submit
 To live his vassal? No : come fire, come sword,
 Yoke thy proud steeds, fill all the fields with chariots,
 Thou never shalt extort my kingdom from me.
 If wrong must be, when empire is the prize
 The noble cause gives glory to the wrong :
 In all besides let justice hold her course.

CHOR. This boast of glory ill becomes the tongue,
 Save where the deeds are glorious : else it holds
 Nothing of honour, but offends 'gainst justice.

JOC. Think not, Eteocles, my son, that Age
 Inherits nought but ills : Experience waits it,
 To wisdom train'd beyond the reach of youth.
 Why dost thou court that baneful pest Ambition?
 Do not, my son : her pow'r is built on wrong.
 Where'er the Demon sets her foot, that house,
 That state sees all its high-rais'd glories vanish,
 And Desolation enters : yet on her
 Art thou enamour'd. Juster honours wait
 On Moderation : she links friend to friend,
 And state to state in firm society :
 For on the mind of man her equal laws
 Hath Nature stamp'd : but wild Ambition's flight
 Each rank below opposes, and at once
 Begins the war. Her equal laws first fix'd
 Equality of measure, poised the scale,

And taught the nice array of marshall'd numbers.
The dark-brow'd night, the radiance of the sun,
In fair succession walk their annual round,
Unenvious each of th' other's reign : hence night
And the sun's ray are useful to mankind.
But thou wilt brook no equal, nor to him
Allow his share of rule : where then is justice ?
Why with unbounded heat dost thou pursue
This flourishing injustice, royalty ?
What are its honours which thou prizest thus ?
To be conspicuous ? That's an empty glory.
Or wou'dst thou labour much, whilst thy rich house
Possesses much ? And what is this abundance ?
'Tis nothing but a name : the temperate mind,
Its wants supplied, checks each desire of more :
And mortal man enjoys not as his own
His treasur'd stores ; but holds them as the gift
Of the high gods, who at their will resume them.
Wealth then hath no stability, but fleets
With each loose hour. Yet further let me ask,
Is it thy wish to reign, or save thy country ?
Say'st thou, to reign ? Should he be conqueror,
Should thy troops fall beneath the spear of Argos,
Then shall thine eyes behold this city vanquish'd,
Then shall thine eyes behold its captive virgins
Dragg'd by the rude hands of th' insulting foes.
So shall this love of empire, which inflames thee,
Be ruinous to the Thebans : yet thou art
Ambitious of its honours. This to thee.
Now, Polynices, be to thee my words.
Unwisely hath Adrastus to thy will
Indulged this grace ; and foolishly hast thou
Advanced in arms to desolate thy country.
Shou'dst thou subdue this land, (may no such ill
Await it !) by the gods, how wilt thou raise
The trophies of thy spear ? How consecrate
The hallow'd victim for thy country vanquish'd ?
Or wilt thou on the banks of Inachus

Engrave upon the spoils, "Thebes laid in ashes,
 "The victor Polynices to the gods
 "Fix'd here these shields." Ah, never may that glory,
 Won by the arms of Greece, be thine, my son!
 Shou'dst thou be conquer'd; should his arms prevail,
 How wilt thou, leaving thousands of her sons
 Here slain, revisit Argos? Every tongue
 Will clamour, "In ill hour this fatal love
 "Didst thou allow, Adrastus; for one bride,
 "And her unhappy nuptials, on our heads
 "Hath ruin fallen." With eager speed, my son,
 Thou runnest on double ill, to be bereav'd
 Of these thy friends, and fail in this attempt.
 Check then, my sons, O check your wild ambition;
 Both are imprudent, and conflicting thus
 Bring on the greatest and most hateful ills.

CHOR. Avert these ills, ye gods, and give the sons
 Of Ædipus t' attune their souls to love!

ETEO. This contest words decide not, but the time
 Is wasted fruitlessly: thy earnestness
 Avails not: there can be no thought of concord,
 But on the terms proposed, that I retain
 This Sceptre, and alone reign monarch here;
 Then give me way, forbear thy tedious precepts.
 For thee, hence from these walls, or thou shalt die.

POL. By whom? Who is there so impenetrable,
 That dares 'gainst me lift his ensanguin'd sword,
 And shall not see his warm blood smoke on mine?

ETEO. Thou'rt near him, in his presence: dost thou see
 These hands?

POL. I see them: but effeminate wealth
 Is base, and spiritless, and fond of life.

ETEO. Comest thou with numbers then against a man
 Of no essay in arms?

POL. Discretion's guard
 Becomes a chief better than daring fierceness.

ETEO. Thy insolence presumes upon the truce;
 That saves thy life.

- POL. Yet once more I demand
The sceptre, and my just share of the kingdom.
- ETEO. Fruitless are thy demands; in mine own house
I will be lord.
- POL. And hold more than thy portion?
- ETEO. Thou hast my answer: hence then, quit the town.
- POL. Ye hallow'd altars of our guardian gods,
- ETEO. Which thou art come to trample in the dust.
- POL. Hear me.
- ETEO. What god can hear thee thus in arms
To desolate thy country?
- POL. And ye shrines
Of the twin gods mounted on milk white steeds.
- ETEO. Who hate thee.
- POL. From my country I am driv'n.
- ETEO. For thou art come to waste it.
- POL. Driv'n, ye gods,
By thy injustice.
- ETEO. At Mycenæ call
The gods, but not at Thebes.
- POL. Unrighteous art thou.
- ETEO. But not, like thee, an enemy to my country.
- POL. Thou drivest me hence despoil'd.
- ETEO. Nay more, this hand
Shall kill thee.
- POL. O my father, dost thou hear
The wrongs I suffer?
- ETEO. And the wrongs thou dost
He hears.
- POL. And thou, my mother?
- ETEO. 'Tis in thee
Impiety to name her.

666. The Scholiast doubts whether these gods were Castor and Pollux, or Zethus and Amphion, but inclines to the latter. Carmeli allows us, if we please, to think them Apollo and Diana, because *λευκόπαιλος* is an epithet of Apollo as the Sun. Valckenaer without hesitation assigns the address of the Theban Chief to the founders of the Theban Citadel, and with reason, referring the reader to Herc. Fur. v. 29, 30.

- POL. O my country !
- ETEO. To Argos go, there call on Lerna's stream.
- POL. I go; disquiet not thyself. To thee,
My mother, let me pay my thanks.
- ETEO. Begone,
Hence, from this country.
- POL. Hence I go: but first
Give me to see my father.
- ETEO. Thou obtain'st not
That grace.
- POL. My virgins sisters then.
- ETEO. Nor these
Shalt thou e'er see again.
- POL. Ah my poor sisters !
- ETEO. Why namest thou them? Thou art their greatest foe.
- POL. But thou, my mother, fare thou well.
- JOC. To me
What can be well, my son?
- POL. I am thy son
No more.
- JOC. To many miseries was I born.
- POL. For he heaps wrongs upon us.
- ETEO. No: to me
The wrong is done.
- POL. Where wilt thou take thy station
Before the tow'rs?
- ETEO. And why that question?
- POL. There
Will I oppose thee front to front; there kill thee.
- ETEO. My soul's on fire to meet thee.
- JOC. Wretched me !
What will you do, my sons?
- ETEO. That will be seen.
- JOC. Will you not fly the furies of your father?
- POL. On his whole house fall ruin !
- ETEO. Soon this sword
No more inactive shall be stain'd with blood.
- POL. Thou earth that nurturedst me, and you, ye gods,

I call to witness, that dishonour'd, wrong'd,
 Calamitous, I hence by force am driv'n,
 Spurn'd as a slave, an alien to the blood
 Of Œdipus. Should aught of ill hence fall
 On thee, my country, charge the fault on him,
 Not me: reluctant am I come, reluctant
 Was I driv'n hence. And thou, imperial Phœbus,
 Presiding o'er these streets, farewell: ye mansions,
 That hold the loved companions of my youth,
 Ye hallow'd statues of the gods, farewell.
 For that again it may be mine t' address you
 I cannot warrant: yet hope slumbers not,
 Nor my firm trust that, with the gods, this hand
 Shall kill him, and secure my reign o'er Thebes.

ETEO. Away, begone: well did thy father give thee
 A name portending contest and much strife.

CHORUS.

STRO. When Cadmus from the Tyrian strand
 Arriving trod this destin'd land,
 Heav'n-taught the Heifer led his way,
 Till down to willing rest she lay,
 Marking his future seat:
 By fate assign'd the furrow'd plain,
 Thick-waving with the golden grain;
 Assign'd the verdure-vested meads,
 Through which the beauteous Dirce leads
 Her crystal currents fleet.
 The pregnant mother here of yore
 To Jove the blooming Bacchus bore;
 And instant o'er the boy divine
 With wanton wreaths the ivy twine
 Entrail'd its pale-green shade:
 To Bacchus hence through festive groves
 The train of Theban matrons roves;
 The virgins hence in frolic bands,
 Waving their ivy-twisted wands,
 The dance fantastic lead.

ANTIS. A dragon there in scales of gold
 Around his fiery eyeballs roll'd,
 By Mars assign'd that humid shade,
 To guard the green extended glade,
 And silver-streaming tide:
 Him, as with pious haste he came
 To draw the purifying stream,
 Dauntless the Tyrian chief repress,
 Dash'd with a rock his sanguine crest,
 And crush'd his scaly pride.
 Then at the martial maid's command
 With his deep plough-share turns the land,

734. To the history of Cadmus, which is given in a note to the Seven Chiefs of Æschylus, it is not necessary to add any thing here: yet perhaps the explanation of it by the mythologists may not be unacceptable to the reader. The account of Palæphatus is, that Draco, the son of Mars, was king of Thebes, and was slain by Cadmus: the friends and the sons of Draco continued the war against Cadmus, till finding themselves inferior to him they fled into different parts, having first seized his treasures, among which were some teeth of elephants: these forces afterwards infested the country with frequent incursions; which gave the Thebans occasion to say, that Cadmus brought these evils upon them by killing Draco, and that many brave men sown from him, *σπαρτοί*, made war upon them. Hence the fable.

The learned and ingenious Mr. Bryant says, that “all the poetical accounts of heroes engaging with dragons have arisen from a misconception about the Ophite towers and temples, which those persons either founded or took in war. Or if they were deities, of whom the story is told, these buildings were erected to their honour. But the Greeks made no distinction. They were fond of heroism, and interpreted every ancient history according to their own prejudices; and in the most simple narrative could find out a martial achievement. No colony could settle any where, and build an Ophite temple, but there was supposed to have been a contention between a hero and a dragon.” *Analysis*, v. i. p. 431.

One, who does not often presume to withdraw the mythological veil, is willing to hazard a conjecture here, that the dragon slain by Cadmus was the Chief, whether of the name of Draco or of an Ophite tower, who opposed the settlement of Cadmus: the teeth of the dragon are his forces: these sprung from the ground in arms, that is, were natives of the country who continued the war: Cadmus by the admonition of Minerva, which designs Wisdom, sowed dissensions among them, and induced some of them to espouse his cause: he then married a lady of the country, Palæphatus says she was the sister of Draco; this alliance must be very favourable to his arms, and gave him a peaceable establishment; hence Harmonia is said to be the daughter of Mars and Venus: and the gifts of the gods, who honoured these nuptials with their presence, were the blessings of peace.

The dragon's teeth wide scattering round;
 When sudden from the furrow'd ground
 Embattled hosts arise:

But Slaughter's iron arm again
 Consigns them to their native plain,
 And their lov'd earth, that to the day
 Shew'd them in heav'n's ethereal ray,
 With streaming crimson dies.

EPOD.

Thee, whom to thund'ring Jove of yore
 On Nile's moist margin I bore,
 Iö, from whom this mighty race
 Their heav'n-descended lineage trace,
 Thee, Epaphus, I call: my pray'r,
 Barbaric though my voice, O hear!
 Barbaric though my pray'r, attend,
 This race, thy progeny, defend!
 Come, O come, and with thee join
 The double-named Proserpine,
 And bounteous Ceres, smiling queen,
 That holds o'er all her golden reign;
 For all things take from her their birth,
 Nurtured by the fertile earth:
 Bring these deities, whose sway
 The copious-rising fruits obey,
 This land to guard, once their abode:
 All things are easy to a god.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

ETEO.

Go thou, with thy best speed bring Creon hither,
 The brother of Jocasta; bear from me
 This message, on affairs of high importance
 Our house respecting, and my country's weal,
 I would hold counsel with him, e'er we move
 Embattled, and address the spear to fight.—
 His presence spares thy trouble; tow'rd's my house
 With voluntary step I see him coming.

CREON, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

CRE.

Each various station have I visited,

Wishing to see thee, all the gates around,
And guards, if haply I might find the king.

ETEO. Thee, Creon, have I wish'd to see; for vain
Th' imperfect treaty, when on terms of peace
With Polynices I held conference.

CRE. Proud of his new alliance with Adrastus,
And on his force presuming, he aspires
Higher than Thebes can brook: but on the gods
Behoves us to repose that care: what most
May check his proud attempt, I come to warn thee.

ETEO. What may that be? I comprehend thee not.

CRE. Fled from yon hostile camp an Argive comes.

ETEO. What now their purpose? Brings he aught of new?

CRE. Soon at each tow'r of Thebes yon Argive host
Will circle the beleaguer'd town in arms.

ETEO. Without the walls then must our arms advance.

CRE. What, does the fire of youth disturb thy sense?

ETEO. And soon before these ramparts join the fight.

CRE. Few are the troops of Thebes, their numbers great.

ETEO. I know them, champions bold in puissant words.

CRE. Argos bears some renown in Greece for arms.

ETEO. Soon with their carnage will I fill yon plain.

CRE. A work of no small toil, though much I wish it.

ETEO. I will not coop my forces in the walls.

CRE. Conquest on prudent counsels always waits.

ETEO. What different measures wilt thou I attempt?

CRE. All, e'er that extreme hazard put to proof.

ETEO. Should our close arms attack them in the night?

CRE. Failing in that, canst thou retreat secure?

ETEO. The night, alike to all, befriends the bold.

CRE. Danger in night's dark shades strikes deeper terror.

ETEO. Should I rush on them whilst they take repast?

CRE. That might alarm; but victory is our aim.

ETEO. Near rolls the stream of Dirce, deep to pass.

CRE. Behoves us best a firm and armed guard.

ETEO. Or should I lead my horse, and charge their troops?

CRE. With rolling cars their files are fenc'd around.

ETEO. What shall I do then? Tamely yield the town?

CRE. No: but deliberate well, if thou art wise.

- ETEO. Say, what more prudent plan can be devised?
CRE. Sev'n from among them, so it is reported,
ETEO. And what their mighty charge? The force is small.
CRE. To lead their troops assaulting our sev'n gates.
ETEO. What should we do? I brook not this suspense.
CRE. Choose thou sev'n chiefs t' oppose them at the gates.
ETEO. Heading their bands? Or each with single spear?
CRE. Heading their bands: and see thou choose the bravest.
ETEO. To guard the tow'rs, I ween, from all access.
CRE. Add other leaders: one man sees not all things.
ETEO. For boldness chosen, or deliberate thought?
CRE. For both: small merit singly each can boast.
ETEO. It shall be so: to the sev'n tow'rs with speed
I go, and at each gate, as thou hast said,
Appoint the chiefs, opposing man to man.
To name them would delay me, whilst the foes
E'en to the walls advance. Haste calls me hence,
To rouse our arms to action. In the fight
Let me but meet my brother, front to front
Opposed, my spear shall reach him, strike him dead,
That hither came to desolate my country.
The marriage of Antigone, my sister,
And thy son Hæmon, should the adverse fates
Frustrate my expectation, be thy care:
Affied before, their spousals e'er I go
I now confirm. Thou art my mother's brother,
What need of words? let her have worthy treatment,
Such as becomes my honour, and thy own.
My father hath the meed his rashness earn'd,
From light self-exiled: much I praise him not:
E'en now with words of fiercest execration
He calls down ruin on us. Yet one thing
Remains: if aught of oracle the seer
Tiresias hath to speak, enquire it of him:
Thy son Menceceus, from his grandsire named,
Shall lead the prophet hither; to thy ear
He willingly will speak, with me offended,
For that I censur'd his divining art.

One thing I charge thee, Creon, charge the state,
 Should victory grace my arms, let not the corse
 Of Polynices in this Theban earth
 Find sepulture: if any, though of those
 We hold most dear, entombs it, let him die.
 This, Creon, to thy charge. You, my attendants,
 Bring forth my arms, the mailed dress of war,
 That to th' appointed contest of the spear
 I may rush forth, aspiring to revenge
 And conquest. Thou, calm courage, be our guide,
 High-valued goddess, save, O save my country!

CHORUS.

STRO.

Woe-working Mars, relentless pow'r,
 In blood and death why this severe delight,
 Untuned to Bacchus and the festive hour?
 Why 'midst the measures, on some bridal night,
 The rosy-crowned Nymphs among
 Dost thou not spread thy lightly-waving hair,
 And, temper'd to the flute's mellifluous air,
 Enchant the Graces with a jocund song?
 Thy joy to wild and fierce alarms,
 Amidst the horrid clash of arms,
 Lured with the scent of blood yon host to lead,
 In rude and unharmonious dance;
 Not like the sweet enthusiast's brisk advance,
 Who clad in fawn skins lightly tread,
 Shaking their ivy spears, the giddy round:
 But rolling cars among, and trampling steeds,
 That proudly bear their curb-embowed heads,
 And o'er the margent of Ismenus bound;
 Thy joy to shake the thund'ring field,
 'Gainst yon proud host with martial fire
 The dragon sons of Thebes t' inspire,
 Each grasping fierce his glitt'ring shield;
 And, nigh the rampires as they stand
 In arms, to form each martial band.
 O Discord, dreadful is thy pow'r

Rolling these storms of war, that low'r
 Black o'er the monarchs of this earth,
 Who draw from Labdacus their birth!

ANTIS.

O thou, with waving woods embrown'd
 Spreading their broad shades o'er the savage race,
 With crusted snows thy craggy summit crown'd,
 Dear to the virgin goddess of the chase,
 This Œdipus in infant days,
 Though many a golden clasp adorn'd the child,
 To death devoted on thy borders wild,
 In an ill hour, Cithæron, didst thou raise.

In ill hour did thy virgin wing,
 Dire Sphinx, thou mountain monster, bring
 Woes to this land with thy untuneful lay;
 When o'er the walls thy circling flight
 Smote its desponding sons with pale affright;
 When thy fierce talons seiz'd their prey,
 And bore it to the rock's aerial brow:
 Thee hell's relentless king, with dread command,
 Unhallow'd fiend to waste this groaning land,
 Sent from the gloom of Erebus below.

In an ill hour, her flames to spread
 The sons of Œdipus between,
 With hurried step and madd'ning mien,
 Hath Discord rear'd her horrid head;
 Fierce through the royal house to bear,
 And ruin'd realm, the rage of war.
 But honour, to the birth unknown,
 Stamps not the future growth its own:
 So from th' unlawful bed these came,
 The mother's grief, the father's shame.

EPOD.

Thou sacred earth, (the ancient fame
 Barbaric though we are had reach'd our ear,)
 Gavest the proud honours of the Theban name,
 The warrior host, their helmed heads to rear:
 To life each tooth thou badest arise,
 That arm'd the fiery-crested dragon's head.
 To grace the fair Harmonia's bridal bed

Came in bright state the natives of the skies.
 Thou, when Amphion smote his lyre
 To sounds that list'ning rocks inspire,
 Thou saw'st obedient to his pow'rful strains
 Rise the firm wall, the rampired tow'rs,
 'Twixt where his deep'ning flood Ismenus pours,
 And Dirce laves the verdant plains.
 From Iö radiant in her form divine,
 When now she lifts no more her horned brows,
 No more, her shape restored, an heifer lows,
 The Theban monarchs boast their high-drawn line.
 These, and a thousand glories more,
 Recorded in the rolls of fame,
 To grace this city's honour'd name,
 Here their successive radiance pour;
 High lifts her head the stately town,
 And proudly bears her martial crown.

TIRESIAS *led by his daughter* MANTO, MENŒCEUS,
 CREON, CHORUS.

- TIR. A little onward lead me, be an eye
 To these dark steps, my daughter, as the star
 That guides the mariner; o'er level ground
 Direct my slow feet, lest we tread unsafe:
 Feeble thy father. In thy virgin hand
 Hold my oracular tablets, which I mark'd,
 Skill'd in each auspice of the flying wing,
 When in my consecrated seat my voice
 Prophetic of the fates foretells the future.
 My child Menœceus, son of Creon, tell me
 What of our way remains, that through the city
 Will bring me to thy father; for my kneec
 Fails me; with pain I tread this length of way.
- CRE. Be comforted: Tiresias, thou hast steer'd
 Nigh to thy friends thy foot. And thou, my son,
 Support him: like a car its seat unfill'd,
 The foot of age wants ev'ry friendly guide.
- TIR. Well, we are come: what means thy hasty message?

- CRE. Rest thee awhile; no fear that we forget it:
O'er-wearied with the way, recover spirit.
- TIR. One night hath only pass'd since with much toil
From Athens came I hither: there his spear
Eumolpus rais'd in war, wherein I made
The sons of Cecrops glorious conquerors;
And therefore wear this golden crown thou seest,
Rent from the foe, an honourable meed.
- CRE. I hail the omen: that victorious crown
Portends to us like victory: and the storm
Of war, thou know'st, from Argos rolls against us,
And the fierce conflict threatens Thebes. Our king,
Eteocles, in glitt'ring mail array'd,
Is issued to oppose th' assailing foe:
But from thy mouth gave me in charge to learn
What most behoves us do, to save the city.
- TIR. Eteocles! For him I would not ope
My lips, but lock the answers of the gods
In silence: but to thee, since such thy wish,
I will unfold them. Long this country, Creon,
Hath been distemper'd, from the time that Laius,
The gods averse, rashly become a father,
Gave birth to the unhappy Œdipus,
An husband to his mother; and his hands
Tore out his bleeding eyeballs; from the gods
Signal of wrath, and to astonish'd Greece
A dreadful warning: which his sons awhile
Wishing to hide, by such weak subterfuge
Hoping t' escape the gods, insensate err'd:
Not so content, nor honour to their father
Gave they, nor liberty; at which incens'd
Th' unhappy man breath'd in his rage against them
Horrible curses, his disease made keener
By the dishonour added. My attempts,
My arguments avail'd not, save to make
The sons of Œdipus my enemies.
But fate hangs o'er them, Creon, soon to die
Each by the other's hand; and nigh the slain

Numberless slain shall fall, the shock of arms
 Argive and Theban clashing, that this land
 Shall in deep sorrow weep her loss. And thou,
 Unhappy city, thou shalt bow thy head
 Crush'd to the ground, unless my words shall find
 One to obey them: for be well assured
 No son of Œdipus shall reign at Thebes,
 Or e'en inhabit here, as their wild rage
 Would desolate their country. But since evil
 Triumphs o'er good, one only way remains
 To safety: but t' unfold it would to me
 Be dangerous; for to those, whom fate designs
 T' apply their healing aid, and save the city,
 'Tis an hard task: therefore I go, farewell;
 I am but one: if it must be, th' event
 Amidst the general ruin I will bear,
 Alas, what ruin!

CRE. Stay thy steps, old man.

TIR. Withhold me not.

CRE. Stay: wherefore dost thou fly?

TIR. I fly thee not, but fortune.

CRE. Yet disclose

What may preserve the people and the town.

TIR. Now wou'dst thou know what soon thou wilt have cause
 To wish unknown.

CRE. Can I then have a wish

Not to preserve my country?

TIR. Is thy wish

To know, thy zeal so strong?

CRE. What stronger wish

Ought I to have, or what more ardent zeal?

TIR. Then thou may'st hear the answers of the gods.

But first I would be told where is Menœceus,
 Who led me hither.

CRE. Nigh thee yet he stands.

TIR. Let him begone far from my oracles.

CRE. He is my son, nor will divulge what ought
 Be held in silence.

TIR. Wilt thou in his presence
That I speak this?

CRE. With pleasure will he hear
What so concerns the safety of the public.

TIR. Hear then the way my oracles declare,
 What you must do, if you would save this state.
 Since thy voice calls on fortune, for his country
 Thy son Menœceus thou must sacrifice.

CRE. What hast thou said? What were thy words, old man?

TIR. 'Tis fated thus, and thou perforce must do it.

CRE. O what a world of ills in one brief moment
Thy voice hath utter'd !

TIR. Ills indeed to thee,
But to thy country great and glorious safety.

CRE. I have no ears, no sense: perish my country!

TIR. Are these words of Creon? O how chang'd!

CRE. Farewell, begonc; thy oracles I want not.

THU. Is truth no more for that thou art unhappy?

CRE. Low at thy knees, O by those reverend locks,

TIR. Why kneel to me? The ills, which thou wou'dst know,
Are uncontrollable.

[illegible]

TIR. Should I be unjust?
Silence is not permitted me.

CRE. With me
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou then slay my son?

TIR. To others that belongs; to me, to speak.

CRE. But whence to me this ill, and to my son?

TIR. Well hast thou ask'd, demanding thus the cause.
In the same cave where lay the earth-born dragon,
Guardian of Dirce's fountains, must thy son
Be sacrificed, and give his vital blood
Pour'd on the earth, t' appease the wrath of Mars
Incens'd of old 'gainst Cadmus, and avenging
The slaughter of the earth-born dragon. This
Performing, you shall win the aid of Mars.
Offspring for offspring, human blood for blood

If th' earth receive, propitious will you find
 That earth, which from the seed produc'd an harvest
 Waving with golden helms: but from that race
 Sprung from the dragon's teeth one now must die.
 Thou only of that race art left to us,
 Thy blood from either parent flowing pure,
 Thou and thy sons: Hæmon the nuptial contract
 From the chaste sacrifice forbids, betroth'd
 Though not espous'd: this son, if for his country
 Devoted, by his death shall greatly save
 His native land; and to Adrastus work
 Calamitous retreat, and to the Argives,
 Presenting to their eyes a gloomy fate;
 But to the Thebans glory. Of these two
 Choose which decree thou wilt; or save thy son,
 Or save thy country. Thou hast all from me
 Demanded. Lead, my daughter, to my house.
 Unwise is he, that studious bends his thoughts
 To this prophetic art: should he declare
 Unwelcome truths, he would seem harsh to those
 Whose fate his voice discloses: if his soul
 To pity melting softens to untruths
 The oracles, he sins against the gods.
 By Phœbus only should the voice divine
 Be utter'd, as to him fear is unknown.

CREON, MENCECEUS, CHORUS.

- CHOR. Why art thou silent, Creon, thus aghast
 In speechless trance? We too are struck with horror.
 CRE. Who then shall speak, or what? One thing is clear;
 I never on myself will draw that load
 Of misery, for the state t' expose my son
 A victim: nature in each parent's breast
 Implants a fond affection to his children;
 No father can assign his son to die;
 Nor let the voice of praise sound in my ears,
 Slaying my son. My life, mature in age,
 With ready zeal would I lay down, to save

My country. But, my son, haste, e'er this voice
 Rings through the city : bid these froward seers
 Farewell, and fly this country, quickly fly ;
 For he will tell it to the chiefs, the leaders,
 To each that heads the troops at the sev'n gates :
 Prevent him, so shalt thou be safe ; delay
 Would now be fatal to us ; thou must die.

MEN. And whither shall I fly ? What state, what friend——

CRE. Furthest from hence is best.

MEN. To speak is thine,
 Mine to obey.

CRE. Through Delphi speed thy flight.

MEN. And whither speed it ?

CRE. To th' Ætolian land.

MEN. And whither thence ?

CRE. To far Thesprotia's coast.

MEN. Dodona's hallow'd mounts ?

CRE. Thou know'st the place.

MEN. What shall protect me ?

CRE. The attending god
 Shall be thy guide.

MEN. What treasure shall supply me ?

CRE. Gold shall be sent by me.

MEN. Well hast thou said,
 My father.

CRE. Haste then.

MEN. To thy royal sister,
 Jocasta, from whose breasts my infant lips
 Drew their first nouriture, an orphan reft
 Of my own mother, instant will I go
 As to salute her, and to save the city.

CRE. Go then, and go with speed ; form no delay.

MENŒCEUS, CHORUS.

MEN. Ye females, with an honest fraud my words
 Have calm'd my father's fears, effecting thence
 My purpose. Distant far he bids me fly,
 Robbing his country of its fortune, me

To cowardice assigning: to his age
This may be pardon'd; but for me, should I
Betray my country whence I drew my breath,
There could be no forgiveness. Be assured
I go to save my country; for this land
Freely I give my life. Were it not base,
While those, whom no compulsion of the gods,
No oracle demands, advance their shields,
And unappall'd at death before the walls
Fight for their country, should I thus betray
My father, brother, city; and by flight
Give signs of abject fear, scorn'd as a coward
Where'er I go? No, by the throne of Jove
Amidst the golden stars, by sanguine Mars,
Who will'd the warrior race, that from the ground
Uprose, should here be kings, I go to take
My station on the highest battlements,
There pour my blood, and as the prophet's voice
Gave warning, to the dragon's darksome cave
Plunge from that height. This is my firm resolve.
To death devoted, no inglorious off'ring,
I go to save, to free this suff'ring land.
If each would seize th' occasion where his virtue
Might aid his country, to the public good
His share conferring, states, to less of ill
Expos'd, would thenceforth stand secure, and flourish.

CHORUS.

STRO.

It rose, on iron wings it rose:
From the monster-teeming earth,
And the viperous brood of hell
Drew the hideous fiend its birth,
Nigh affrighted Thebes to dwell,
Big with mischief, big with woes.
Once where sacred Dirce springs,
Clanging fierce thy horrid wings,
Didst thou, darting from the sky,
Seize and bear the youth on high;

There exulting o'er the prey
Chaunt thy unharmonious lay;
And, whilst Erinny's nigh thee stood,
Lap thy mangled country's blood.
Blood that vengeful god must please,
Who could prompt to deeds like these.
The matron's moans,
The virgin's groans
Through each sorrowing house resound;
To dismal cries
Like cries arise,
And shriek succeeds to shriek th' affrighted city round:
Like the mingled din of war,
Like the thunder's deep'ning roar,
Such the groan that rent the air,
When high her prey the winged virgin bore.
But in heav'n's appointed hour,
(Such the answers Phœbus gave,)
Œdipus, with fate his foe,
Came this bleeding land to save.
High the joys, the transports flow,
Victor of her subtle lore
When he shew'd the monster dead.
But new miseries soon succeed;
From the nuptial bed they spring:
Son and mother!—Wretched king!
Sick'ning at the guilty rite
Nature starts with pale affright;
And pollution's baleful dews
O'er the town their pest diffuse.
Hence the curse, in anguish pour'd,
Ruthless call'd the vengeful sword:
Hence his sons, with mutual hate
Hurried, rush upon their fate.—
Be fame his meed,
Who dares to bleed,
When his suff'ring country calls:
He goes, he goes;

ANTIS.

To Creon woes

He leaves: but Thebes shall stand, and conquest
grace her walls.

With such sons may we be blest,

Virgin queen, at whose command

Cadmus crush'd the dragon's crest,

Whence rav'nous fiends rang'd through this groan-
ing land.

MESSENGER, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

MESS. Open the gate. Who waits here? Call Jocasta
Forth from the house. Open the gate. How slow!
Come from thy palace, hear me, royal spouse
Of Œdipus: lament and weep no more.

JOC. What tidings bring'st thou, friend, what new misfortune?
Say, is Eteocles dead? to bear whose shield
Was ever thy important charge, to guard him
From flying darts. Or what fresh tale of woe?
Is my son dead, or lives he? Tell me, speak.

MESS. He lives: I come to free thee from that care.

JOC. What of our walls, of our sev'n rampir'd tow'rs?

MESS. All firm, unshaken all: Thebes is not fallen.

JOC. Came they in danger of the Argive spear?

MESS. E'en to th' extreme of danger; but the arms
Of Thebes prevail'd, and quell'd Mycenæ's force.

JOC. Tell me, I charge thee by the gods, what know'st thou
Of Polynices? for my trembling soul
Is anxious for him: views he yet the light?

MESS. The day thus far sees both thy sons alive.

JOC. O be thou blest! But station'd in your tow'rs
How drove you from the gates th' embattled Argives?
Tell me, that I may bear the welcome tidings
Of Thebes preserv'd to glad the blind old king.

MESS. Soon as the son of Creon, on the tow'rs
Conspicuous standing, drew his gloomy sword
And plung'd it in his breast, with glorious zeal
Dying to save his country, sev'n firm bands
With their brave chiefs at the sev'n gates thy son

Close-station'd, 'gainst the Argive foe a guard,
 Horse rang'd for fight 'gainst horse, and shield oppos'd
 To shield, a ready aid, whenc'er our force
 Might on their rampires feel disorder. Soon
 From our high tow'rs we view the Argive host,
 Their white shields glitt'ring to the sun, advanc'd
 From high Teumessus: on with rapid march
 They moved, and in embattled phalanx reach'd
 The trenches nigh the town: the song of war
 They rais'd, and with the sounding trumpet gave
 Fierce sign of battle, from the walls return'd
 With notes as fierce. Panthenopæus first,
 Sprung from th' Arcadian huntress, led his troop
 Horrent with close-wedg'd bucklers 'gainst the gates
 Of Neis: on his massy shield portray'd
 Stands Atalanta, grasping in her hand
 The distant-wounding bow, in act to wing
 The flying shaft against th' Ætolian boar,
 Domestic impress. To the Prætian gate
 The fate-foretelling chief Amphiaraus
 Advanc'd, the hallow'd victims load his car;
 His shield no boastful argument displays,
 No pageant marks his modest arms. Before
 Th' Ogygian gate Hippomedon rear'd high
 His royal crest; and on his shield he bore
 An Argus studded round with eyes; of these
 Alternate some waked with the rising stars,
 Some with the setting clos'd; this might we see
 When now the chief lay breathless on the ground.
 At th' Omolean gate his post in arms
 Held Tydeus, on his shield he bore impress'd
 A lion's shaggy spoils; a Titan he,
 A bold Prometheus, in his right hand waved
 A blazing torch, as he wou'd fire the town.
 To the Crenean gate his armed force
 Thy Polynices led, and on his shield
 The Potnian mares insculptur'd start and bound,
 Whirl'd by the well-form'd caveson within,

Around the boss, shewing their fiery rage.
Not less than Mars to daring deeds inflam'd
Against th' Electran gate fierce Capaneus
His phalanx led : his iron-sculptur'd shield
An earth-born giant held impress'd, whose strength
Bore on his shoulders a whole town, by force
From its foundations rent with massy bars,
Emblem of ruin menac'd to this city.
At the seventh gate Adrastus held his post,
His left hand bore his shield, whose ample orb
An Hydra with an hundred hissing heads,
The boast of Argos, fill'd; and from the walls
Seiz'd in their viperous jaws the dragons bore
The sons of Thebes. Each impress I observ'd,
When to the chiefs I bore the word of war.
First with our bows we fought, and missive spears,
Far-wounding slings, and fragments rent from rocks :
Their battle bleeding, Tydeus call'd aloud,
Thy son soon join'd his voice, " Ye sons of Greece,
" Why, ere these vollied weapons thin our ranks,
" Rush we not on embodied to the gates,
" Foot, horse, and rolling car?" Soon as the word
Was heard, with furious expedition on they roll'd :
There many fell, their helms besmear'd with blood ;
And many from the walls might'st thou behold
Tumbled precipitate on the ground beneath
Breathe out their lives, with streams of gushing blood
Moist'ning the thirsty earth. Th' Arcadian then,
No Argive he, the son of Atalanta,
Impetuous as a whirlwind's stormy force
Rush'd to the walls and cried, Flames here, a spade,
As from their deep foundations he would heave
The shaking ramparts : but his headlong fury
Neptunian Periclymenus repress'd :
Rent from the battlements a pond'rous stone
His strong hand heav'd, and on his helm discharg'd ;
Full on his head it fell, th' enormous mass,
And crush'd the shatter'd bone ; his auburn locks

And purple-blooming cheeks distain'd with blood :
Him on the heights of Mænalus no more
His beauteous-quiver'd mother shall receive
In life's warm glow. Soon as thy son beheld
His arms successful here, to other gates
He hasted ; I attended : Tydeus there
I saw ; in close array his warriors stood
Grasping their shields, and to the battlements
Hurl'd their Ætolian spears ; the rampir'd heights
Our flying troops abandon ; these thy son
Like a bold hunter cheer'd, and to the tow'rs
Led back embattled : thence to other gates,
Thé martial ardour here revived, we haste.
But with what words can I express the rage
Of Capaneus ? He to his post advanc'd,
A ladder in his hand of length to scale
The walls, and in his pride vaunted aloud,
That not the awful fire of thund'ring Jove
Should check him mounting o'er the rampire's height
To storm the town : thus menacing, amidst
A storm of hurtling stones he dared th' ascent,
Beneath his shield collected, and had reach'd
The battlements, when Jove with thunder smote him :
The earth rebellow'd to the roar, that all
Trembled with dread ; and from the steps his limbs
Asunder torn, as with an engine's force,
Were scatter'd diverse ; tow'rd's Olympus flew
His hair, his blood fell on the earth ; his hands,
His feet roll'd whirling like Ixion's wheel,
And to the ground his flaming body fell.
When now Adrastus to the Argive arms
Saw Jove averse, back o'er the trench he led
His forces : ours the fav'ring signal fill'd
With added courage ; on their whirling cars
They drove, mail-clad ; and through the deep array
Of Argos in close fight their spears advanc'd.
All now was rout ; some died ; some from their cars
Fell headlong, o'er them roll'd the bounding wheels ;

Axle with axle clash'd ; the dead on heaps
Lay whelm'd beneath the dead. Thus have we stay'd
Destruction from our tow'rs, this day at least ;
The future, whether fortune to this land
Assigns success, is heav'n's important care.

CHOR. Conquest is glorious : should the gods conceive
Kinder intents, I too should share the joy,

JOC. Well have the gods appointed, fortune well :
My sons are living, and my country stands
Rescued from threat'ning danger. In my nuptials
With Œdipus th' unhappy Creon seems
Alone to suffer, of his son depriv'd,
With glory to the public, to his soul
A private grief. But say, resume thy tale,
This past, what measures will my sons pursue ?

MESS. Forbear the rest : thus far hath fortune bless'd thee.

JOC. Distrust hangs on thy words : I must be told.

MESS. Wou'dst thou have more than that thy sons are safe ?

JOC. I would be told if further I am happy.

MESS. Let me have leave to go ; my office calls me
Attendant on thy son to bear his shield.

JOC. Thus close, thus dark, thou dost conceal some ill.

MESS. I would not cloud thy joy by uttering ill.

JOC. To fly me, through the air must thou escape.

MESS. Why wilt thou not, these joyful tidings told,
Dismiss me ? Why must I relate the ill ?
Thy sons are bent on most unseemly deeds
Of dreadful daring, from each host apart
T'engage in single combat : to the sons
Of Thebes alike and Argos have they spoken
The word that ill becomes them. From his station
On the high tow'r Eteocles began,
Silence to either army first proclaim'd,
“ Warriors of Greece, that on these fields impress
“ Your hostile steps, ye Argive chiefs, and you
“ Embattled Thebans, sell not here your lives
“ In Polynices' quarrel, nor in mine.
“ I from that danger bid you cease ; alone

“ I will engage my brother : if I slay him,
“ Mine be the realm alone ; but should I fall,
“ To him I yield the city ; you, no more
“ In arms contending, shall return to Argos,
“ Nor leave your sweet lives here ; of Thebes’ high race,
“ Enough lie breathless on th’ ensanguin’d ground.”
He spoke, and Polynices from his ranks
Rush’d forth, with joy assenting to his words :
And all of Argos, all of Thebes, with shouts
Applauded, deeming just the terms propos’d.
Soon to the space ’twixt host and host advanc’d
The chiefs in truce, and ratified their faith
On each side with the sanction of an oath.
Now whilst in brazen mail the youthful sons
Of Œdipus invest their limbs, our chief
With friendly zeal the Theban Nobles arm :
Their chief the Argive princes : radiant now
They stood ; no sign of fear, none of remorse
Obscur’d their brows ; but with infuriate rage
Each grasp’d his spear advancing : as they pass’d,
Their ardour with these words their friends inflam’d,
“ Now, Polynices, is it thine to raise
“ To Jove the trophied image, now to give
“ Glory to Argos.” To Eteocles,
“ Now dost thou fight thy country’s champion, now
“ Let conquest grace thy arms, the royal prize
“ A kingdom waits thee.” With such words their souls
They kindle to the fight. The sacred seers,
The victims slain, attentive stand, and mark
Th’ increasing fires, the bursting gall, the flames
Ascending, which a twofold omen bear,
Portending conquest one, and one defeat.
But hast thou aught of pow’r to soothe this rage,
Or words with wisdom fraught, or charmed strain,
Go, check thy sons, prevent this horrid fray ;
For great the danger, as the prize is great ;
And in the bitterness of grief thy tears •

Will flow, of both thy sons at once depriv'd.

JOC. Antigone, come forth ; come forth, my child :
Not to the dance, nor to the virgin bow'r
Th' appointment of the gods now leads thee forth,
But it behoves thee, joining with thy mother,
To stay the mighty chiefs, thy brothers, bent
On death, from falling each by th' other's hand.

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ANT. To what new terrors doth my mother's voice
Before the house thus plaintive call her child ?

JOC. O daughter, fatal to thy brothers' lives
This sad mischance.

ANT. What may this mean ?

JOC. They stand

In single fight oppos'd.

ANT. Ah me ! my mother,
What wou'dst thou say ?

JOC. Nothing of welcome sound.

But follow me.

ANT. My virgin chamber left,

Ah, whither shall I follow ?

JOC. Through the army.

ANT. My blushes 'midst the crowd——

JOC. This is no time

For bashfulness.

ANT. What wou'dst thou I should do ?

JOC. Prevent thy brothers' contest.

ANT. How prevent it ?

JOC. Fall down with me, and grasp their knees.

ANT. Lead thou,

Lead to the lists : the time brooks no delay.

JOC. Haste, daughter, haste. If yet I may prevent
My sons before their combat, heav'n's fair light
Shall cheer my life ; but if thou com'st too late,
'Tis ruin all ; thou too art lost ; and I
Will clasp my dying sons, and die with them.

CHORUS.

STRO.

Woe, woe, woe, woe !

Trembling, shudd'ring with my fears,
 Thrilling horror shakes my frame ;
 Pity fills mine eyes with tears,
 Pity for th' afflicted dame ;
 For the griefs her heart that rend,
 Whilst her furious sons contend.
 Pierc'd through mail and shatter'd shield,
 Which shall stain the crimson'd field ?
 O Jove, O earth, O fatal strife !
 Brother seeking brother's life :
 Which, ah, which shall I deplore
 Breathless welt'ring in his gore !

ANTIS.

O earth, earth, earth !

Shaking each his angry lance,
 Each inflam'd with lion-rage,
 Breathing slaughter they advance,
 Soon in dreadful fight t' engage :
 Soon from many a flowing wound
 Shall their blood distain the ground.
 Higher raise the notes of woe :
 For the slain my tears shall flow.
 Ruin nigh and slaughter wait,
 And this sun decides their fate :
 Dreadful, dreadful is their doom,
 Dark the Fury's baleful gloom.

But cease the strain : for, see, with clouded brow
 Creon advances to this royal house.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE.

Ah me ! which first shall I lament, for which
 Shall I first pour the warm tear ? For myself,
 Or for my country ? Such a dark'ning cloud
 Hangs o'er it, that we walk amidst the gloom
 Of Acheron. My son too, he is fallen,
 Fallen for his country to himself achieving
 A glorious name, but sorrowful to me.

Him lately from the dragon's craggy cave
 Self-slain, unhappy youth ! these hands have borne.
 Through all my house loud sounds the voice of woe.
 Hence with the trembling steps of age I come
 Seeking my aged sister, that her hand
 May bathe my son, no more my son, and lay
 Decent his breathless body : it becomes
 The living to revere the gods below,
 Paying these pious honours to the dead.

CHOR. Thy sister is gone hence ; and on her steps
 Attending went the young Antigone.

CRE. Whither ? What new misfortune call'd her ? Tell me—

CHOR. Her sons, she heard, in single combat lift
 The lance, contending for this royal house.

CRE. What say'st thou ? Whilst my fondness sorrowing hung
 On my son's corse, I came not to this knowledge.

CHOR. Long since thy sister went : ere this I think
 The conflict is begun, which, shall decide
 The fate of these fierce sons of Œdipus.

CRE. Ah, there I see the signal : that man's eye,
 That clouded brow declares his fatal message.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MESS. Ah wretched me, what language shall I use,
 What words !

CRE. Then we are lost indeed : there breathes
 No music in this prelude to his tale.

MESS. Ah wretched me ! for mighty are the ills
 I come to utter.

CRE. To calamities
 Already pass'd, what new hast thou to tell ?

MESS. No more thy sister's sons behold the light.

CRE. Great cause of grief to me, and to the state.

MESS. Hearest thou this, O house of Œdipus,
 Fallen are thy sons, sunk in one common ruin.

CHOR. That, if instinct with sense, it would shed tears.

CRE. O pond'rous misery ! What a load of ills,
 Of woes oppresses me ! Ah wretched me !

MESS. When thou shalt know th' accumulated ills—

CRE. And can there be an heavier load than this?

MESS. With her two sons thy sister lies in death.

CHOR. Raise, raise the cry of woe, and o'er your heads
Your white hands smote with many a sounding stroke.

CRE. Wretched Jocasta, hath thy life, thy nuptials
Found this sad end, caus'd by the riddling Sphinx!—
But say, how fell the sons of Œdipus?

How wrought his vengeful curse the ruin? Tell me.

MESS. That on the arms of Thebes before the tow'rs
Success attended, is to thee well known;—
For not so wide the circuit of her walls
Extends, but that each circumstance must reach
Thy knowledge. But when now the youthful sons
Of the old Œdipus in radiant arms
Had sheath'd their limbs, advancing to the space
'Twixt host and host the rival chieftains stood,
Ready to lift their spears in single fight:
His eye tow'rds Argos Polynices roll'd,
And utter'd thus his pray'r, Imperial Juno,
Goddess revered, for thine I am, since join'd
In marriage with the daughter of Adrastus,
Thy land receiv'd me an inhabitant,
Give me to kill my brother, and to stain
With his warm life-blood this victorious hand
In the fierce contest: an inglorious crown

1546. Valckenaer rejects this line, v. 1378, of the original, and the two following, as spurious; pronouncing them to be absurd, as not suited to persons, time, and place. Mr. Heath defends their authenticity with his usual judgment. The learned Critic would probably have been of a different opinion, had he adverted to the situation of the brothers, and the distinct feelings resulting from that situation: hence arose a characteristic difference, which Euripides knew how to mark with propriety and accuracy. Neither their cause nor their claims were the same. Eteocles, in violation of justice and good faith, had deprived his brother of his right, and driven him into exile; therefore he could listen to no treaty: the same furious spirit, which had prompted him to this act of injustice, incited him to be implacable to his brother whom he had wronged, and harsh to his mother who endeavoured to effect a reconciliation between her sons; and he appears no otherwise to love his country, than as it was the seat of his regal power, the possession of which his ambition would not suffer him to resign: he is

I ask, to kill a brother : tears gush'd forth
 From many, as their eyes each glanc'd on each,
 Pitying their fate. But to the hallow'd dome
 Of Pallas glorious with her golden shield
 His eyes Eteocles turn'd, and thus address'd her,
 Daughter of Jove, give my victorious spear,
 Lanc'd by this hand, to pierce my brother's breast,
 And kill him, for he came to waste my country.
 But when the torch was hurl'd, which, as the sound
 Of the Tyrrhenian trumpet, gives the signal
 Of bloody battle, furiously they rush'd
 In dreadful opposition ; as two boars
 Whetting their savage tusks, their jaws besmear'd
 With foam, they met impetuous with their spears.
 But each beneath his round shield lay at ward,
 That the steel glanc'd in vain : if either rais'd
 His eye above the verge, the other drove
 With eager haste full at his face the lance ;
 But to the grated openings that adorn
 The rim, his eye with caution each applies,
 And disappoints the spear. With throbbing hearts,
 More that the combatants, their friends around
 Intent and anxious for their chieftain glow.

therefore uniformly violent, and, in the spirit of a man that has done an injury, implacable. Polynices had reason and justice on his side ; he demanded only his share of the kingdom ;

Regnum reposcit : causa repentis bona est ;

Mala, sic petentis :

as Seneca well observes : his spirit therefore, as well as his demands, is more moderate : he behaves to his mother with tenderness and filial piety, expresses a true affection to his country, and shews himself willing to be reconciled to his brother on equitable terms : nay even at his death he expressed a concern for his brother, and retained a fond remembrance of their former friendship.

1555. This, the Scholiast observes, alludes to an ancient custom in use before the invention of trumpets, where a torch-bearer, whose person was sacred, advancing into the middle space between the combatants, threw his torch as a signal for the battle. See also the insigne on the shield of Capaneus in *Æschylus*, and the note. But if trumpets were not invented till after the Trojan war, how comes it that the Poet mentions them here, and before at v. 1109 ?

It chanc'd against a stone Eteocles
 Impress'd his foot, thus turn'd without the verge
 Of his broad shield: this Polynices saw,
 And where the part was open to the blow
 Drove through the plated greave his Argive spear;
 All the Pelasgian troops shouted aloud.
 His shoulder in the effort left exposed
 The wounded chief observ'd, and aim'd his lance
 With well-directed force against the breast
 Of Polynices, to the sons of Thebes
 Requiring joy; but faithless to his hand
 The steel point broke: now in the headless truncheon
 No more confiding, quick a backward step
 He moved, then seiz'd and whirl'd a rugged stone:
 Full on the spear the pond'rous marble fell,
 And crash'd it in the midst: the combat now
 Was equal, of the spear each chief depriv'd.
 Their falchions then they grasp'd, and furious rush'd
 To closer conflict; shield to shield advanc'd
 Sustain'd the clashing tumult of the fight:
 Eteocles, with presage of success,
 Call'd to his aid the wily discipline
 Learnt in Thessalia, from the pressing toil
 Withdrew his left foot backward, guarding well
 His body, with his right advancing wheel'd
 Oblique, and plung'd his sword deep in his bowels,
 Driven to the chine. Th' unhappy Polynices
 Stood writhing with his tort'ring wound awhile,
 Then fell, the blood fast welling from the wound.
 And now the victor, as secure of conquest,
 Threw down his sword to strip him of his arms,
 Heedless of him, and on the spoil intent;
 A fatal oversight: he breathing yet,
 And grasping in his dreadful fall his sword,
 Scarce rais'd it as he lay; Eteocles
 Stooping receiv'd it in his heart. Thus both
 Together fell, together lie in blood,
 Biting the ground, the conquest undecided.

- CRE. O Œdipus, with friendly grief I mourn
Thy ills: the god hath ratified thy curse.
- MESS. Yet give me hearing, whilst I speak of ills
Added to ills. Expiring on the earth
Her sons were fall'n, when the unhappy mother,
Attended by her virgin daughter, came
With zealous speed: soon as she saw their life
Fast-flowing from their wounds, with shrieks she cried,
Too late, my sons, too late to succour you
I come: then clasping each, o'er each she mourn'd,
Wailing the painful care with which her breasts
Nourish'd their infancy. Their sister too,
Companion of her griefs, with sighs address'd them,
Ye dear supporters of your mother's age,
My much loved brothers, how have you betray'd
My virgin hopes! With pain his gasping breath
Eteocles drew, but at his mother's voice
Stretch'd forth his hand moist with the dews of death:
He utter'd not a word, but with his eyes
He spoke to her in tears, signal of love.
But Polynices, yet alive, his eyes
Cast on his sister, and his aged mother,
And spoke these words, Destruction on our heads
Is fall'n, O mother; yet I pity thee,
My sister, and my brother stretch'd in death:
A friend, though made a foe, is yet a friend.
O thou, to whom I owe my birth; and thou
My sister, in my native earth entomb me,
And pacify th' exasperated state.
Be this at least of my paternal soil
My portion, though the royal seat be lost.
Let thy dear hand, my mother, close my eyes:
(And with his own he drew it to their lids:)
Now farewell both; the shades of death surround me.
Thus each expiring, their unhappy lives
Resigned together. When the mother saw
This dire event, impatient of her grief,
From her dead son she snatch'd the reeking sword,

And did a deed of horror ; through her throat
 She thrust the steel, and on their much-loved bodies,
 Each in her arms embracing, lies in death.
 Straight to the strife of words the armies rose ;
 We claim'd the conquest for our chief, and they
 For theirs ; amidst the leaders stern debate
 Was kindled ; these contend that Polynices
 First won th' advantage with his spear ; and those
 That victory for neither had declared,
 Where both were slain. Then from the bick'ring troops
 Antigone withdrew : they rush'd to arms.
 The sons of Thebes had providently sate
 Reclining on their shields : prevention then
 Was ours, and sudden on the Argive host,
 Not yet accoutred in their arms, we fell ;
 And none sustain'd th' attack, but hasty rout
 And flight fill'd all the plains ; the blood of thousands,
 That fell beneath the spear, flow'd on the earth.
 Thus were we victors in the fight ; and some
 The trophied image raise to Jove ; whilst some
 Snatch from the Argives slain their shields, and send
 The spoils to grace the town ; others attend
 Antigone, and this way bear the dead,
 To share the last sad office of their friends.
 Thus on one part the state in her success
 Rejoices, on one part bewails her loss.

CHOR. No more the ruin of this royal house
 Pierces our ears ; our eyes may now behold
 Advancing to these gates th' unhappy three,
 That sunk together to eternal night.

The dead Bodies borne.

ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ANT. Unveil'd these locks, whose graceful ringlets wave
 Shading my tender cheeks, the purple glow
 Of virgin modesty that lights my face
 I dread not to expose, thus on the dead
 Wild with my grief attending : from my hair

I rend the golden caul: ye gorgeous vests
Radiant with crimson dies, I cast you off,
Ill suited to this mournful pomp of death.
Woe, woe; unhappy me! Alas my brother,
Poor Polynices! fatal was thy name,
Portending strife. O Thebes, I feel thy woes!
Thy strife, no strife, but slaughter stain'd with gore,
Horrible, mournful, desolates the house
Of Œdipus. What voice shall I invoke,
Its dismal harmony attuned to groans,
Accordant to my tears, my tears that flow
For these three kindred bodies bath'd in blood,
My mother and her sons; a cruel joy
To fell Erinnyes? She in ruins crush'd
The house of Œdipus, what time, ah me!
Unfolding her inexplicable charms
Unhappy father, thou didst give to death
The savage and discordant-screaming Sphinx.
Did ever Grecian or Barbaric dame,
Any of noble birth in times of old
Thus see their dear friends slain, and weep like me?
Wretch that I am, what strains of woe break from me!
O that some bird, high on the waving bough
Of oak or fir, her mother lost, would join
Her griefs to mine, and echo back my notes
In harmony of sorrow, wailing thus
These gaping wounds! For ever shall I lead
A solitary life, for ever wail
As now, the tears still streaming from mine eyes.
To whom, whom first shall I devote these locks
Rent from my head? Where shall I offer them?
Lay them upon my mother's breasts of milk,
Or on the deep wounds of my slaughter'd brothers?—
Come forth, my aged father, leave thy house,
Bringing thy sightless eye; shew, Œdipus,
Thy wretched age, thou, that within the house,
Darkling amidst the gloom thine own hands wrought,
Dost drag a ling'ring life. Hear'st thou my voice,

Dark-wand'ring in thy hall, or on thy couch
Resting thy age-enfeebled weary foot?

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ŒD. Why, virgin, with these lamentable cries
Why hast thou brought my blind, staff-guided steps,
Call'd from my couch within my darksome chamber
To light, a grey and unsubstantial phantom,
A body from the tomb, a fleeting dream?

ANT. Unhappy are the tidings, O my father,
Which thou shalt hear. Thy sons no more behold
The light of heav'n: thy wife no more, whose care
With constant tenderness beside thy staff
Supported thy dark steps. Alas, my father!

ŒD. Alas, my miseries! For to groan, to wail
These things is yet allow'd me. By what fate,
These three, how left they this ethereal light?
Tell me, my child.

ANT. I mean not to reproach,
I mean not to insult: but with deep sorrow
I speak: thy evil genius, O my father,
Hurtling with swords, and fire, and ruthless combats,
Rush'd on thy sons.

ŒD. Ah me! unhappy me!

ANT. Wherefore these groans!

ŒD. My sons!

ANT. The paths indeed
Of sorrow wou'dst thou tread, if by the car
Of yon refulgent sun illumed thine eyes
Might o'er these lifeless bodies roll their orbs.

ŒD. The ruin of my sons needs not a comment:
But my unhappy wife, by what ill fate,
Tell me, my child, am I deprived of her?

ANT. Her mournful tears fast-streaming in the sight
Of all, before her sons she bared her breast,
Suppliant she bared her breast in suppliant guise.
Before th' Electran gates, where with the lotus
The mead abounds, her sons the mother found

Contending with their spears, like two young lions
 Bred in one cave, whilst from their gaping wounds
 The kindred gore outwell'd; for now had Mars
 Presented that libation, bloody, cold,
 And Pluto had receiv'd it. From the dead
 She snatch'd the sword, and plung'd the ruthless blade
 Deep in her body: nigh her sons she fell,
 In death embracing each. This day, my father,
 The god that wrought these things hath crush'd our house
 With all th' accumulated weight of woe.

CHOR. This day hath to the house of Œdipus
 Been the beginning of unnumber'd woes.
 May the succeeding days bring happier fortune!

CRE. No more of lamentation, as the time
 Calls our attention to the funeral rites.
 Now hear me, Œdipus, and mark my words.
 To me thy son Eteocles assign'd
 The sceptre of this land, the nuptial dowry
 To Hæmon with the bed of this thy daughter
 Antigone. No longer then will I
 Permit thee to inhabit here: full clearly
 Tiresias spoke, that whilst thou dwellest in it
 This city should not flourish: quit it then:
 I speak not this t' insult thee; nor am I
 Thine enemy: but thy avenging demons
 I dread, lest aught of ill the state should suffer.

ŒD. O fate, how wretched, how oppress'd with ills,
 Such as man never suffer'd, hast thou form'd me
 E'en from my birth! Me, ere I saw the light
 Of life, the voice of Phœbus from his shrine
 Declared the future murderer of my father,
 Wretch that I am! Soon as I breath'd this air,
 Laius, who gave me life, to death assign'd me,
 As an ill-fated foe, beneath whose hand
 It was his destiny to die; a prey
 To savage beasts my wretched infancy
 Craving the breast he cast forth; yet from thence
 Was I preserv'd: O had Cithæron sunk

Down to the yawning gulfs of Tartarus,
 Which did not then destroy me ! As a slave
 To Polybus the ruthless pow'r assign'd me.
 Ill-fated wretch, I slew my father, mounted
 My mother's hapless bed, and begot sons
 My brothers : these have I destroy'd, from Laius
 The curse receiving, and transmitting it
 Down to my sons : for nature form'd me not
 So senseless, to devise such stern designs
 'Gainst these poor sightless eyes, 'gainst my sons' lives,
 But by some god impelling. Be it so.
 What then, unhappy, shall I do ? What guide
 Will my dark steps accompany ? Will she,
 That here lies dead ? Well know I, were she living,
 She would attend me. Will that noble pair,
 My sons ? I have no sons. My youthful vigour,
 Will that procure me the supports of life ?
 But whence ? Why, Creon, wilt thou kill me thus ?
 For thou wilt kill me, if thou drive me forth.
 Yet shall I not, by grovelling at thy knees,
 Shew myself abject ; no inglorious deed
 Shall stain the splendor of my former honours.

CRE. Well hast thou said, thou wilt not grasp my knees ;
 This land I would not suffer thee inhabit.
 Now for these bodies : that behoves us bear
 Within the royal house : but him, who came
 With banded powers to lay his country waste,
 Forth from the borders of this injured land
 Cast him unburied. To the sons of Thebes
 Be this proclaim'd ; Whoever shall be found
 Crowning his corse, or covering it with earth,
 He dies for his offence : No ; let him lie
 Unwept, unburied, to the birds a prey.
 But thou, Antigone, forbear thy grief
 For these three dead ; retire within the house ;
 Think what becomes a virgin, and expect
 Th' approaching day, when Hæmon's bed awaits thee.

ANT. To what a wretched fortune are we fallen,

Alas, my father! More for thee I mourn,
Than for the dead: thine are not partial ills
Inwoven with good, but one sad scene of woe.
Yet let me ask thee, our new lord, Why thus
With insults drive my father from this land?
Why 'gainst th' unhappy dead pronounce this sentence?

CRE. It is not mine: Eteocles so will'd.

ANT. Unwise in him: unwise in thee t' obey.

CRE. Is it not just to execute commands?

ANT. No, if they're ill, and giv'n through ranc'rous hate.

CRE. Is it not just to cast him to the dogs?

ANT. Such vengeance hath the sanction of no law.

CRE. What, though his country's foe, which least became him?

ANT. To his ill fortune paid he not his life!

CRE. Aye: and let vengeance wait his outcast corse.

ANT. What the offence to claim his share of empire?

CRE. This man, be well assured, shall lie unburied.

ANT. I, though the state forbid, will bury him.

CRE. Thyself then near his body wilt thou bury.

ANT. 'Tis glorious for two friends to lie together.

CRE. Lay hold on her, and bear her to her chamber.

ANT. Off; touch me not; I will not quit this body.

CRE. Fate hath decreed what appears harsh to thee—

ANT. It is decreed the dead be not insulted.

CRE. That o'er his corse none lays the humid earth.

ANT. By my dead mother, by Jocasta, Creon—

CRE. Thy prayers are vain: thou canst not here prevail.

ANT. Permit me this at least, to bathe his body.

CRE. This too is interdicted by the state.

ANT. Yet let me seemly bind his cruel wounds.

CRE. No honour, Virgin, may'st thou shew his body.

ANT. Yet, dearest brother, will I kiss thy lips.

CRE. Bear not this ominous mourning to thy nuptials.

ANT. What, whilst I live, shall I e'er wed thy son?

CRE. Of strong necessity: how shun his bed?

ANT. That night shall find me sprung from Danaus.

CRE. Mark her bold spirit: with what contempt she speaks!

ANT. The conscious sword be witness to my oath.

- CRE. And wherefore dost thou wish to shun these nuptials?
 ANT. With my unhappy father will I fly.
 CRE. 'Tis generous of thee; but there's folly in it.
 ANT. Wou'dst thou know more? I will e'en die with him.
 CRE. Hence then: thou shalt not kill my son: begone.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

- ŒD. This ready zeal, my child, demands my praise.
 ANT. A bride, whilst my poor father strays alone!
 ŒD. Remain thou blest: my own ills will I cherish.
 ANT. Who then shall to thy blindness minister?
 ŒD. Where'er my fate to fall, there will I lie.
 ANT. Where now is Œdipus? His honours where?
 ŒD. Sunk: one day saw my glory, and my ruin.
 ANT. Ought I not then to share thy miseries?
 ŒD. To stray an exile with an eyeless father
 Is to a daughter shameful.
- ANT. To the proud
 It may; but not to humble modesty.
- ŒD. Lead me then nearer: let me touch thy mother.
 ANT. There: with thy hand touch her most dear remains.
 ŒD. O wretched mother! O most wretched wife!
 ANT. In this sad state, crush'd with her ills, she lies.
 ŒD. Where lies Eteocles? Polynices where?
 ANT. In death together stretch'd they lie before thee.
 ŒD. Guide my blind hand to their unhappy faces.
 ANT. There; as I guide thy hand, touch thy dead sons.
 ŒD. Ye wretched ruins of a wretched father!
 ANT. O Polynices, name most dear to me!
 ŒD. Now, daughter, is the oracle fulfill'd.
 ANT. What? Hast thou more of ills to add to ills?
 ŒD. That wand'ring exiled I should die at Athens.
 ANT. What citadel of Athens shall receive thee?
 ŒD. Colonus, sacred to th' Equestrian god.
 But come, to thy blind father be assistant,
 Since 'tis thy wish to share his hapless flight.
- ANT. Go then to hapless flight: reach thy dear hand,
 My aged father; take me for thy guide,

A fav'ring gale to waft thy shatter'd bark.

ÆD. I go, my child: be thou my wretched leader.

ANT. Wretched indeed we are; Thebes hath no virgin
So very wretched.

ÆD. Which way shall I set

My aged foot? Reach me my staff, my child.

ANT. This way, come this way with me: this way, this way
Advance thy foot, my father, thy worn strength
Weak as the phantom of a sickly dream.

ÆD. O miserable exile! Woe is me!
In mine old age he drives me from my country;
Alas, my suff'rings!

ANT. Dwell not on thy suff'rings:
Justice regards not, nor with vengeful hand
Chastises the oppressor's insolence.

ÆD. Yet reach'd I that sublime and heav'nly lore,
Which led to glorious conquest, when I solved
The dark enigma of the virgin Sphinx.

ANT. Why dost thou mention her disgrace? No more
Speak of thy former glories: suff'rings now,
And miseries wait thee, O my father, driv'n
An exile from thy country far to die.
With tears of fond affection tow'rd the virgins
My dear companions, with thee will I go
Far from my country, wand'ring in sad state
Unseemly to a virgin.

ÆD. Generous spirit!

ANT. That spirit in my father's wretchedness
Shall make me noble. Yet my heart is rent
At this indecent insult on my brother,
Cast out to moulder, an unburied corse.
Him in the secret earth these hands, my father
Though certain death await me, shall entomb.

ÆD. Go shew thee to thy friendly train of virgins.

ANT. I have enough of wailings.

ÆD. At the altars
Present thy vows.

ANT. They are e'en now o'erloaded

With my afflictions.

ÆD. To the mountains go,
Where unapproach'd, save by the Mænades,
Bacchus his temple holds.

ANT. Once on those heights
Clad in the Theban dress, a fawn's light skin,
I led the sacred dance of Semele:
An unrequited honour to the gods.

ÆD. Illustrious citizens of Thebes, my country,
Behold your Œdipus, whose piercing mind
Solv'd the mysterious charm, and crush'd the pow'r
Of the blood-ravening Sphinx, the greatest then
Amongst you: now unhonour'd, wretched, driv'n
An outcast from your land!—But why in vain
Lament I thus and wail, since mortal man
Must bear the hard necessity of fate!

CHOR. O Victory, I revere thy sober pow'r:
Guard thou my life, nor ever cease to crown me!

THE
SUPPLICANTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ÆTHRA

THESEUS

ADRASTUS

ARGIVE HERALD

MESSENGER

EVADNE

IPHIS

SON OF CAPANEUS

MINERVA

CHORUS OF ARGIVE DAMES.

THE SUPPLICANTS.

THE Supplicants are the mothers of the Argive Chiefs, who fell in the cause of Polynices before the gates of Thebes. Creon, who succeeded to the crown upon the death of the brothers, exceeded the inhuman injunctions of Eteocles, and refused the rites of sepulture not to Polynices only, but to all the leaders who perished in that attack, commanding that their bodies should lie unhonoured, unburied, and exposed to ravenous birds and beasts of prey. This was considered by the ancients as the greatest of all misfortunes, far worse than death itself, of which we have many instances both in sacred and profane history; and indeed, whatever philosophy may teach, humanity is on the side of their opinion. The learned writer of the *Archæologia Græca*, who treats this subject at large, has omitted the reasons here assigned by Theseus,

———Each various part

That constitutes the frame of man, returns

Whence it was taken: to th' ethereal sky

The soul, the body to its earth: of all

Nought, save this breathing space of life, our own:

The earth then, which sustain'd it when alive,

Ought to receive it dead.

In like manner Cyrus, when dying, ordered his sons to return his body to the earth: "for what can be a
 "greater happiness," says he, "than to be mixed
 "with the earth, which produceth and nourisheth
 "every thing that is beautiful, every thing that is
 "good? Throughout my life I have been bene-
 "volent, and now I think with pleasure of partici-
 "pating with that which is most beneficent to men."

Public funeral honours owed their origin to the wisdom of Egyptian legislation; "those profound masters of
 "wisdom, in projecting for the common good, found
 "nothing would more contribute to the safety of their
 "fellow-citizens than the public and solemn interment
 "of the dead: as without this provision, private mur-
 "ders might be easily and securely committed. They
 "therefore introduced the custom of pompous funeral
 "rites: to secure these by the force of religion, as well
 "as civil custom, they taught that the deceased could
 "not retire to a place of rest till they were performed."

Div. Leg. vol. i. book ii. chap. 4. It is not necessary to enter deeper into their reasoning: Tragedy takes advantage of established opinions as well as facts, and from thence speaks to the passions: these are here strongly touched. Adrastus, not being able to prevail upon Creon to restore the bodies of his friends or to allow them the rites of sepulture, and not being in a condition to assert them by arms, goes to Eleusis, and implores the protection of Theseus: the mothers of the dead chiefs attend him; these form the Chorus, and suppliantly entreat that benevolent hero to engage in their cause, to vindicate their sons from this barbarous insult, and the most sacred laws of Greece from violation.

It was indeed glorious enough for the Athenians to

have engaged in this common cause of humanity, and the poet is never deficient in doing honour to his countrymen : but this is not mere unmeaning flattery. It is very probable that this tragedy was exhibited in the third year of the ninetieth Olympiad, that is, in the fifth year of the Peloponnesian war, in which year the Argives, having been defeated by the Lacedæmonians, concluded a treaty with them, and made an incursion into the Attic territory : this accounts for the sarcasm on Sparta, and the hauteur with which Theseus receives Adrastus, which, considered in any other light, must appear ungenerous. But whether this play was written before or after that invasion, its purpose was to shew the ingratitude of the Argives to their benefactors, and that their attempts would be ineffectual, from this prediction of Minerva, whose intervention, always highly agreeable to the Athenians, has here a peculiar propriety. There can be no doubt but that the narration was drawn from the history of the times, and that the oath engraven on the tripod was yet preserved in the temple of Delphi ; otherwise the mention of it would have had no weight or authority, but would rather have been a subject of derision to the Argives, had it been merely a fiction of the poet. We are led to this observation, as well as to many others on this tragedy, by Markland, whose learning and penetration are only equalled by his modesty and candour.

P. Brumoy begins his examen of this play by observing, that the opening of it must be striking. *Æthra*, says this critic, is represented at the foot of an altar, and surrounded with priests, the temple filled with women bearing branches of olive in their hands, &c. This is mentioned to caution the reader against a mistake which would destroy the whole œconomy of

the drama. The scene is indeed magnificent ; Æthra, attended by the priests, is represented as bringing her oblations to the altar of Ceres, which was placed in the area before her temple at Eleusis : here she is surrounded with the Argive dames bearing olive branches in their hands : Adrastus, with the sons of the deceased chiefs, is standing at some distance in the vestibule of the temple : this is to preserve the decorum of Grecian manners, which allowed not the women to appear in public with the men ; thus in the Heraclidæ, Alcmena and the daughters of Hercules are within the temple, whilst Iolaus and the sons are represented as standing round the altar, because the Chorus there consists of men ; that altar also is placed in the open air before the temple, as is the altar at Delphi to which Creusa flies for refuge. In this situation all the business of the drama must be supposed to have been transacted ; and the depth of the Athenian stage allowed the Chorus not only to see, but even to converse with Evadne on the rock which hung over the funeral pile of her husband : this, had the Chorus been stationed within the temple, could not have been. Besides, this temple at Eleusis was held so sacred, that none but persons who had been initiated into the mysteries were permitted to enter it : the poet therefore could not fix the scene of his drama within its hallowed walls, without being guilty of a profanation to which his own manners were averse, and which an Athenian audience would not have suffered.

THE
SUPPLICANTS.

ÆTHRA, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

ÆTH. **P**ROTECTRESS of Eleusis and this land,
Propitious Ceres, and you holy men
Attendant on her shrines, with favour look
On me, on Theseus, on th' Athenian realms,
And on the state of Pittheus, whose fond care
In royal splendor train'd my early years,
Till his loved Æthra to Pandion's son,
Ægeus, the father gave, by Phœbus warn'd.
Such vows I breathe, beholding these, who left
Their seats at Argos, and with suppliant boughs
Fall at my aged knees ; for full of horror
Are their afflictions. Childless is their age,
Their seven brave sons slain at the gates of Thebes,
Whom late Adrastus, king of Argos, led
T' avenge the exiled Polynices, join'd
In marriage with his daughter, and with arms
T' assert his share of royalty, derived
From CEdipus. The chiefs fall'n by the spear
The mothers would inter ; the victor's pride
Forbids, nor suffers them to bear away
The dead, insulting the just laws of heav'n.
Touch'd with the common grief my needful aid
Adrastus craves, moist'ning his eye with tears,
And lies lamenting this unhappy war,

3. The temple of Ceres, in which her mysteries were celebrated, was at Eleusis, a town of Attica not far from Athens : there was also a temple at Athens, called Eleusinium, sacred to Ceres and Proserpine. *Barnes.*

10. See note to the Suppliants of Æschylus, p. 72. l. 12.

And the lost troops that march'd from Argos with him.
 Me he conjures to supplicate my son
 By friendly embassy, or hostile arms,
 To bear the dead away, assigning them
 The common rights of sepulture. This task
 On Theseus and th' Athenian state alone
 He charges. Haply from my house I came
 Bringing the first oblations to this shrine
 For our well-cultur'd land; here first the corn
 Waved o'er the field its bearded head, and gave
 Promise of plenty; hence these verdant stalks
 Unbound I grasp, attending at the altars
 Of Proserpine and Ceres. Touch'd with pity
 At the hoar hairs of these lamenting mothers
 Reft of their sons, and with religious awe
 Their holy wreaths revering, to the town
 An herald have I sent to call my son;
 That either from our land this mourning train
 He may remove, or at their suppliant tears
 Redress their rig'rous wrongs. By man unaided
 No deed will female modesty attempt.

CHOR. See at thy knees an aged matron falls,
 And with a voice, which years have hallow'd, begs,
 Conjures thee to restore our sons, that lie
 Mould'ring in death, their livid corpses cast
 A prey to ravening savages that haunt
 The mountain thickets. See these tears, that move
 Thy pity, melting round mine eyes: behold
 These cheeks, which age hath furrow'd, by my hands
 Streaming with blood. Is there not cause? My sons,
 My slaughter'd sons I brought not to my house,
 Nor see the mounds rise o'er their buried limbs.

33. At Eleusis in the Rharian fields they say that corn was first sown, and first produced a crop; and there the threshing-floor, called by the name of Triptolemus, and his altar are shewn. *Pausan. Attic.*

35. The annotators are much divided with regard to the sense of this passage, v. 32. Vox ἔχουσα est valde ambigua, et in ambiguo quis audet affirmare quænam vera sit interpretatio? Ambiguitas visa est in voce δειπνόν quoque; et de ambiguis sine fine vel fructu litigari potest. *Markland. ad loc.*

And thou too, reverend lady, art a mother,
Thou with a son hast bless'd thy husband's bed :
What then had been thy thoughts? What must be mine?
How wretched in my slaughter'd son, that lies
A putrid corse? Plead then our cause ; entreat
Thy son, to whom we urge our suit, persuade him
Advancing to Ismenus, to restore
The bodies of the youths to these sad hands,
That I may celebrate the solemn rites,
And lay them in a marble monument.
Not to constrain thee fall I at thy knees,
Not so, I come a suppliant to these fires
Which on the altars blaze : yet have we justice,
And thou hast pow'r, thus happy in thy son,
To rescue me from my unhappiness.
My sufferings claim thy pity ; I beseech thee
Give me my son, that, wretched as I am,
I yet may clasp my son's lamented body.

Groans to groans succeeding flow :
Now the sad attendant train
Smite their hands in speechless woe,
Sorrowing partners of my pain.

You, whom black misfortune's hand
Led this mournful way with me,
Haste, and join th' afflicted band
Pluto sternly joys to see.

Ruthless strive your cheeks to tear,
Till the blood your white hands stain :
These are off'rings of despair,
Off'rings grateful to the slain.

Mine th' unsated joy to shed
From these eyes the tearful rain ;
Like the rock, whose wave-wash'd head
Ceaseless drops into the main.

Yes, my tears shall ceaseless flow,
 Ceaseless rise th' heart-rending groan;
 'Tis the luxury of woe,
 Mourning o'er my slaughter'd son.

When affliction rends our breast,
 Sighs and tears are all we have:
 O that my sorrows were at rest,
 Slumb'ring in th' oblivious grave!

THESEUS, ÆTHRA, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THES. This voice of woe, this beating of the breast,
 This lamentation o'er the dead, whence comes it?
 It seems to issue from this royal temple.
 Fear lends me wings, lest aught of ill betides
 My mother, whom with hasty step I seek:
 Long since she left my house.—What may this mean!
 This claims new question: sitting at the altars
 I see my honour'd parent; and around her
 A train of females, strangers, not one form
 Of ills expressing; from their aged eyes
 Tears moving pity stream upon the ground;
 Shorn are their locks; their vestments ill beseeem
 This festal pomp. What may this mean, my mother?
 Inform me: something strange my mind expects.

ÆTH. These females are the mothers of those chiefs,
 The sev'n that fell before the gates of Thebes;
 And, as thou seest, my son, with suppliant branches
 They thus enring me round.

THES. And who is he,
 That at the portal pours such mournful groans?

ÆTH. Adrastus, so they call him, king of Argos.

THES. These children round him, whose are they? His sons?

ÆTH. Not his, but of the chiefs slain in the war.

THES. To us why come they with these suppliant boughs?

ÆTH. This is their province; they will best inform thee.

THES. To thee thus closely muffled I address me:

Unwrap thy head ; forbear thy sorrows ; speak ;
Nought is achiev'd where silence chains the tongue.

ADR. Victorious king of Athens, noble Theseus,
Suppliant to thee, and to thy state, I come.

THES. What wou'dst thou ask ? What doth thy need require ?

ADR. Thou art no stranger to my ruinous war.

THES. Thy march through Greece was not obscure, nor silent.

ADR. There did I lose the noblest sons of Argos.

THES. These are the dire effects of wasteful war.

ADR. Their bodies of the hostile town I ask'd.

THES. By heralds ask'd, that thou might'st bury them ?

ADR. They, by whose arms they fell, refuse to yield them.

THES. What cause assign'd ? For thy request was just.

ADR. Proud of success, they know not how to bear it.

THES. Comest thou to me for counsel ? Or what else ?

ADR. I wish to bear away the youth of Argos.

THES. Where is your Argos ? Are its high vaunts vain ?

ADR. Defeated, sunk, we fly to thee, O Theseus.

THES. By thine own impulse this, or from the state ?

ADR. T' inter their dead the dames of Argos sue.

THES. Why didst thou lead these sev'n brave bands to Thebes ?

ADR. To gratify the husbands of my daughters.

THES. And to what Argives didst thou give the virgins ?

ADR. Th' alliance of no Argive did I seek.

THES. To whom of foreign birth didst thou affy them ?

ADR. To Tydeus, and the Theban Polynices.

THES. What prompted thee to fix on such a choice ?

ADR. The oracles of Phœbus darkly utter'd.

THES. What of thy daughters' nuptials said the god ?

ADR. That I should match them to a boar and lion.

THES. And how this dark response didst thou expound ?

ADR. Exiled, and coming to my gates by night—

THES. Who are they ? For of two is thy discourse.

ADR. Tydeus and Polynices fiercely fought.

THES. Gavest thou to these, as to wild beasts, thy daughters ?

ADR. Likening their fight to those fierce savages.

THES. Why came they flying from their native soil ?

- ADR. Tydeus, for that he shed a brother's blood.
THES. What drove the son of Œdipus from Thebes?
ADR. His father's curse, lest he should slay his brother.
THES. This voluntary exile speaks him wise.
ADR. Yet in his absence greatly was he wrong'd.
THES. What, seiz'd his brother his inheritance?
ADR. T' avenge these wrongs I went, and was defeated.
THES. Didst thou consult the seers, and mark the flames?
ADR. Thou urgest that wherein I chiefly fail'd.
THES. Thou camest not then, it seems, with heav'n thy friend.
ADR. Nay more, I led Amphiaraus by force.
THES. Hence from the gods foul rout disgraced thy arms.
ADR. Too much the turbulent youth impell'd my mind.
THES. For cool discretion, daring rashness led thee.
ADR. And that to many a leader hath been fatal.
But, king of Athens, bravest chief of Greece,
To my disgrace this shame is added, thus
To bow me to the ground, to grasp thy knees
In mine old age, whose former years, like thine,
Knew better fortune: yet perforce I yield
To my afflictions. Rescue then our dead;
Pity my ills; pity these mourning mothers,
Mothers no more, whose hoary age is sunk
To childless solitude: a foreign soil
For this they tread, with pain their feeble feet
Their aged limbs sustaining; not a train
In honourable ambassage to grace
The mystic rites of Ceres, but as suing
T' inter their sons, by whom themselves interr'd
Had well been honour'd with a timely tomb.
'Tis well when down on penury the rich
Will deign to cast their eye, and penury
Look upward to the rich, that emulation

161. The Scholiast on Homer, *Iliad* xiv. v. 120. says, that Tydeus was the bravest of the sons of Œneus: whilst he was yet a youth, he saw his father, on account of his age, driven from his kingdom by the sons of Agrius; he therefore slew them, and with them his own brother Menaliopus, involuntarily.

May spur these on to the desire of wealth,
And their high fortune may be taught to fear
A mournful change. The poet, when he forms
His lofty verse, must form it with a mind
Impress'd with transport: if his mounting soul
Feels not this free alacrity, in vain,
Distress'd at home, would he inspire delight
To others; Nature frowns on the attempt.
But thou may'st ask, Why hast thou pass'd the realms
Of Pelops, and on Athens this hard task
Imposed? My answer shall be plain and just:
Sparta is pitiless; and various humours
Mix in its councils; and the other states
Are small and weak: thine hath alone the pow'r
T' achieve this enterprise; for to distress
It knows to feel, and glories in its chief
Vig'rous in youthful prime: the fatal want
Of such an head have many cities rued.

CHOR. With his I join my supplications, Theseus;
With pity look on my calamities.

THES. Warmly this argument with others oft
Have I disputed, who assert that ill
To mortal man assign'd outweighs the good.
Far otherwise I deem, that good is dealt
To man in larger portions: were it not,
We could not bear the light of life. That Pow'r,
Whatever god he be, that call'd us forth
From foul and savage life, hath my best thanks.
Inspiring reason first, he gave the tongue
Articulate sounds, the intercourse of language:
The growth of fruits he gave, and to that growth
The heav'n-descending rain, that from the earth,
Cheer'd by its kindly dews, they might arise,
And bear their life-sustaining food mature: to this
The warm defence against th' inclement storm
He taught to raise, and the umbrageous roof
The fiery sun excluding: the tall bark
He gave to bound o'er the wide sea, and bear

From realm to realm in grateful interchange
The fruits each wants. Is aught obscure, aught hid?
Doubts dark'ning on the mind the mounting blaze
Removes; or from the entrails' panting fibres
The seer divines, or from the flight of birds.
Are we not then fastidious to repine
At such a life so furnish'd by the gods?
But man's vain thoughts affect a state beyond
Divine, and in their arrogance assume
Pre-eminence of wisdom o'er the gods.
Of such art thou; yet hast thou little claim
To wisdom: by the oracles of Phœbus
Constrain'd, for such thy plea, as if the gods
Thought like weak mortals, didst thou give thy daughter
To wed a stranger, with polluted blood
Staining thy glories, to thy house's honour
A mortal wound. Ill it becomes the wise
With the unjust to match the just: their friends,
Of dangers not improvident, they choose
Among the flourishing; for round us waits
One common fortune; and full oft the gods
Crush in the ruins of the falling guilty,
Entangled in their fall, the innocent.
Thus all thy Argives ledd'st thou to this war,
The augur's voice forbidding, and their omens
Held in contempt: hence has thy impious daring
Defied the gods, and led by headstrong youth
Brought ruin on thy country. They, whose minds
Delight in glory, wars enlarge on wars,
Spurning at justice, and the wasted state
Unpeopling: one the pride of martial sway
Allures; the insolent pow'r of doing wrong
Inflames another; and the sordid gain
Hath charms for some; each of the people's toils
Reckless, or what they suffer. In each state
Are mark'd three classes: of the public good
The rich are listless, all their thoughts to more
Aspiring: they, that struggle with their wants,

Short of the means of life, are clamorous, rude,
 To envy much addicted, 'gainst the rich
 Aiming their bitter shafts, and led away
 By the false glosses of their wily leaders:
 'Twixt these extremes there are who save the state,
 Guardians of order, and their country's laws.
 Shall I then in thy cause unsheath the sword?
 What plea of honour to my citizens
 Can I advance? No: fare thou well; ill-timed
 Thy thoughts, and unadvised, if thou cou'dst hope
 In thy ill fortune to entangle us.

CHOR. He err'd: yet led by the rash heat of youth
 The wise have err'd: forgive his error then.

ADR. Of my ill fortune, king, I chose thee not
 A judge, but to relieve it: should my actions
 Be of a stamp which honour cannot own,
 To punish, to rebuke, to thee, O king,
 Belongs not; but to aid me. Be thy will
 To this averse, to what thou shalt resolve
 I must perforce submit; for what relief?
 Come then, ye aged dames, your verdant boughs
 Here leave, and let us hence: but call the gods
 To witness, and this earth, this sacred pow'r,
 Torch-bearing Ceres, and the sun's bright beams,
 That all our supplications at the altars
 Avail us nothing. Yet thy noble lineage
 From Pelops dost thou trace; and of the land
 Where Pelops reign'd are we, the kindred blood
 Rich in our veins: and wilt thou then betray
 The ties of consanguinity, and drive
 These matrons forth suing to thee in vain?
 Thou wilt not. Each his refuge, in his rock
 The savage, at the altars of the gods
 The poor slave finds; and when the black storm swells,
 State flies to state for succour: for its course

293. Ceres having lost her daughter Proserpine, whom Pluto seized in the fields of Enna, lighted two torches at the flames of *Ætna*, and sought her night and day through all the world: hence her title, *The torch bearer*.

Through mortal life no blessing holds unchang'd.

CHOR. Go, wretched mother, on this sacred floor
Of Proserpine, go, cast thee at his feet,
And grasp his knees: for my dead sons, ah me!
For my dead sons, slain in their youthful prime
Beneath the walls of Thebes, I pour my pray'r.
Ye partners of my grief, support me, bear me,
Lead me; now suppliant stretch your aged hands.
O thou most lov'd, thou most approv'd through Greece,
Reverence this aged cheek, this trembling hand
That grasps thy knees; have pity on a mother,
Who for her sons entreats thee; pity me
A mournful wand'rer, with a mournful voice
Lamenting: suppliant I conjure thee, see not
My sons, in years like thine, unburied lie,
Cast on the fields of Thebes a prey to beasts.
See my tears stream, whilst at thy knees I beg
For my dead sons the rites of sepulture.

THES. Why weeps my mother, lifting to her eyes
Her fine-woven veil? Weeps she to hear their plaints
Movingly utter'd? They have moved e'en me.
But raise thy hoary head, melt not in tears
Thus seated near the hallow'd fires of Ceres.

ÆTH. Alas, alas!

THES. Nay, grieve not at their grief.

ÆTH. Ah wretched dames!

THES. Thou art not of their number.

ÆTH. Wilt thou I speak, my son, what may do honour
To thee, and to the state?

THES. With freedom speak:

Oft from a woman's voice hath wisdom flow'd.

ÆTH. It shames me to disclose my private thought.

THES. To hide from friends what honour prompts, is shame.

327. All mourning was forbidden at the festivals of the gods, particularly at the sacred rites of Ceres. Livy tells us in two places, that after the battle of Cannæ the sacrifices of this goddess were intermitted, because it was not lawful for persons in mourning to perform them, and there was not a matron at that time without a share of mourning. L. xxii. 56. xxxiv. 6. *Markland.*

ÆTH. I will not check my words, and after blame
 That silence as ill-judg'd; nor through a fear
 It may be deem'd unseemly in a woman
 To speak, though justly, in my bosom lock
 What honour bids disclose. Hear me, my son:
 Of highest import is it to respect
 The gods, lest slighting these thou err 'gainst them,
 Err in this point, in all besides approved
 Wise. If with generous boldness to protect
 The injur'd were unmeet, I would have closed
 My lips in silence: but to thee, my son,
 This charge brings honour, nor have I a fear
 To urge thee to the task, these violent men,
 Who to the dead deny the destin'd tomb,
 And rudely rob them of their obsequies,
 To force through strong necessity to yield
 This pious office, with bold hand to check
 A savage pride, which all the laws of Greece
 Confounds: no closer tie together holds
 The civil state, than well to guard its laws.
 Will not men say that, lost to virtuous deeds,
 When to the state thy hand had pow'r t' acquire
 The crown of glory, thou through fear declinedst
 The great achievement: 'gainst the savage boar
 Thou daredst engage; but when occasion calls thee
 To look undaunted on the glittering helm,
 And grasp the spear, there thou art found a coward?
 So never shall my son be found. Thou seest
 Thy country held in scorn as spiritless,
 On her insulting scorers in disdain—
 Look with a gorgon eye: by virtuous toils
 Her fame shall rise: dark deeds may suit low states,
 And dark inglorious thoughts. Shall not my son
 Arise th' avenger of the injur'd dead,
 And these unhappy dames, that crave his aid?

358. This alludes to his dangerous engagement with the wild boar, or rather sow, of Crommyon, which he slew. *Plut. Life of Theseus*, p. 8. ed. Bryan.

I have no fear, whilst justice arms thy hand,
E'en though I see the sons of Thebes elate
With conquest: war hath yet another die
To cast; and the just gods will humble pride.

CHOR. Blest be thy voice: well hast thou spoke to him,
And well for me: hence springs a double joy.

THES. To him my words were just, and I disclosed
My thoughts well weigh'd wherein his councils err'd.
Yet of myself I see those things, to which
Thy voice exhorts, how foreign to my manners
To start at dangers: many noble acts,
And my free choice, bid Greece look up to me
As the avenger of injurious deeds.
The soul of Theseus scorns to shrink from toils.
What would the tongue of malice say, when thou,
My mother, feeling all a mother's fears,
Art first to bid thy son achieve this task?
I will achieve it, and to these sad dames
Rescue their dead by pleaded reason; else
By the strong spear: nor will the gods withhold
Their tutelary aid. Yet 'tis my wish
The state decreed this, and it will decree,
Knowing my will: but their free voice allow'd,
I win the people's grace: to sovereign rule
I rais'd a chief, who to this state restored
Free pow'r of equal suffrage. I will go,
Leading Adrastus to enforce my words,
To their assembly; and, my suasive voice
Prevailing, marshal here the gallant youth
Of Athens; and in arms awaiting send
An embassy to Creon, the dead bodies
Requesting. But, ye aged dames, remove
Your honour'd wreaths which close my mother round,
That I may lead her to the house of Ægeus,
Holding her hand. Unhappy is the son,
Who to his parents pays no ministry:
That honourable service well perform'd,
He from his sons receives in recompence

The duteous reverence he had shewn his parents.

CHOR. O my country, whose rich meads
 Glory in their bounding steeds,
 Hear, Pelasgia, hear this king;
 Argos, let thy echoes ring:
 Piety, with valour join'd,
 Prompts to glorious deeds his mind.
 Would his gentle pity go
 All my wearied lengths of woe;
 Give me from the bloody plain
 To remove th' unburied slain!
 Notes of praise, the hero's meed,
 Would through Argos sound the deed.

Toils which virtue marks her own,
 Are to states their brightest crown.
 He, that guards his country's laws,
 Claims his country's just applause.
 Friendship too her province knows,
 On my sons a tomb bestows.

Tow'rs, where Pallas holds her state,
 Soften a sad mother's fate:
 Guard the laws, nor let rude man
 Their humanizing pow'r profane:
 Justice always is your care,
 To the impious wretch severe.

THESEUS, HERALD, ADRASTUS, CHORUS, THEBAN HERALD.

THES. Thy office, herald, and that office well
 Thou know'st, oft calls thee, faithful to the state
 And me, to bear our mandates. Haste thee, herald,
 Pass the Asopus, and the stream of Thebes
 Ismenus; to the noble king thus say,
 "Theseus, whose realms adjoin to thine, requests

438. Cithæron was the common boundary of the Theban and Athenian territories. *Pausan. Attic.*

“ This grace, t’ inter the Argive dead : his wish,
 “ T’ obtain this courtesy, thereby to hold thee
 “ A friend to Athens.” If their will assents,
 With thy best speed return : if they refuse,
 Bid them expect unwelcome guests in arms.
 My troops in warlike muster now are rang’d
 In glittering arms along the sacred verge
 Of deep Callichorus ; this enterprise
 With prompt and cheerful zeal the state assumed,
 Soon as my will was known.—But who comes here
 Across my speech ? An herald, it should seem,
 From Thebes : forbear awhile : he comes perhaps
 Meeting my wish ; thy toil may then be spared.

TH.HER. Which is the monarch of this land, to whom
 Behoves it me address the words of Creon,
 Lord of the Theban state, since at our gates
 Eteocles fell by his brother’s hand ?

THES. Stranger, thy speech begins with a mistake,
 Seeking a monarch here ; for this free state
 Knows not the rule of one : the people share
 In due succession annually the pow’r,
 Nor suffer wealth t’ assume an eminence
 To which the poor claim not an equal right.

TH.HER. In this thou grantest us the better cast.
 The state, whence I am sent, obeys one man,
 The people lord it not. We know not there
 Th’ inflated orator, whose rattling words,
 As interest prompts him, turns the multitude,
 Each diversely : for he, that gains to-day
 Their grace, and winds himself into their hearts,
 Offends to-morrow ; with fresh calumnies
 Then cloaks his former naughtiness, and steals
 From punishment. Shall they, who want the skill
 To form their speech, have skill to form the state
 Aright ? Mature experience is a guide

446. Callichorus is a well at Eleusis, where the Eleusinian women first formed
 the dance, and sung their hymns to the goddess. *Pausan. Attic.*

To wisdom, better than uncounsel'd haste.
How should their minds, the poor, whose hands are hard
With delving in the earth, unschool'd besides
In knowledge, labour for the public weal?
Ill fares it with the better ranks, when those
Of low degree by their audacious tongues
Start from their base obscurity to pow'r.

THES. A delicate herald this; he files his tongue
To a fine trick of words. Since thou hast chosen
Thus to obtrude thy arguments, receive
The answer reason dictates: hear me then.
Of all the evils that infest a state,
A tyrant is the greatest: there the laws
Hold not one common tenor; his sole will
Commands the laws, and lords it over them;
This pow'r thou hast not. Where the laws are written,
The weak, the rich have all one equal course
Of justice; and the lower ranks, when wrong'd,
Know their redress against injurious greatness;
And penury, with justice on its side,
Triumphs o'er riches: this is to be free.
Is there a mind that teems with noble thought,
And useful to the state? He speaks that thought,
And is illustrious: else, he holds his peace.
Is not this equal right? When a free people
Are sovereigns of their land, the state stands firm,
And glories in its rising youth that pay
A prompt obedience. To a tyrant this
Is hateful: all the virtuous and the wise
His gloomy jealousy devotes to death.
How can that state be firm, where ruthless pow'r,
Like a scythe sweeping o'er the vernal meads,
Cuts off each braver spirit, and mows down
Youth's opening flow'rets? Who would toil, to raise
Stores for his sons and riches, when anon
A tyrant comes, and seizes what his toil
Hath rais'd? Or who to virgin modesty
With care would form his daughters in his house,

If for a tyrant's pleasure they are train'd,
 To revel in their charms, and wring the tear
 From the sad parent's eye? Let me not live
 To see my daughters thus by violence
 Dragg'd to a wanton bed. Thus be thou answer'd.
 Now say, what brought thee hither? Of this state
 Aught wanted? If no public messenger,
 Thou comest to rue thy vanity of speech.
 Thy office leads thee, having told thy charge,
 Back to return with speed: and to my state
 Let Creon, should occasion lead him to it,
 Send one that better knows to rule his tongue.

CHOR. When fortune to the worthless gives success,
 Their prosperous state engenders insolence;
 Weening their greatness never can be shaken.

TH. HER. Now let me speak my message, since thy thoughts
 In this debate are different far from mine.
 I charge thee then, and, all the sons of Thebes,
 Let not Adrastus find admittance here.
 Is he now here? Ere yon bright lamp of day
 Sinks in the west, his mystic wreaths unbound
 Bid him depart this land: nor strive by force
 To bear the dead away; the state of Argos
 Concerns not thee. If to my suasive voice
 Thou yield attention, thou shalt steer thy state
 Secure from surging waves: if not, the tide
 Of war o'er us, o'er thee, and our allies
 Will roll its rage: weigh this; nor at my words
 Incens'd, as in thy free state glorying, send
 An haughty answer back: for a vain hope
 In arms, the worst of ills, hath oft engaged
 States in fierce conflict, kindling pride to fury.
 When once the public voice is pass'd for war,
 Of his own death each thinks not, and this ill
 Turns from himself to others: but were death
 Before their eyes ere yet the vote had pass'd,
 The fury of the spear had ne'er on Greece
 Brought ruin. When the alternative is placed

Before us, all can see the better part,
 Discern the good and ill, and know that peace
 Is far a greater good to man than war:
 Dear to the muses, and to deeds of blood
 Averse, it glories in its rising youth
 Train'd up to virtue, and with liberal heart
 Rejoices in its wealth: these blessings scorn'd,
 With impious thought we rush on war, t' enslave
 The vanquish'd, man to man, and state to state.
 To grace the hated slain, t' entomb the dead,
 Whose proud deeds were their ruin, is thy care:
 Unjustly then the thunder's vollied flames
 Smote Capaneus, and from the ladder's height,
 Rais'd 'gainst our bulwarks, hurl'd him headlong down,
 Vaunting with impious oaths, the gods assenting
 Or not assenting, he would storm the town.
 Unjustly then the yawning earth ingulf'd
 The augur, closing on his harness'd car:
 And at our gates the other chieftains lie
 Crush'd from the battlements. Either thy pride
 Claims wisdom more than Jove, or to the gods
 Denies the right to punish impious men.
 A wise man's love streams to his children first,
 Next to his parents, to his country thence,
 Studious to raise its glory, not to crush it.
 A daring leader is a dangerous thing:
 The pilot too is wise, who knows his time
 To moor his ship in safety: and I hold
 Discretion to be man's most manly part.
 SUFFICED it not the vengeance on our heads
 From Jove? Nor ought you do us this foul wrong.
 O thou most vile—

ADR.

THES.

Adrastus, close thy lips,
 Nor before mine let thy reply be heard:
 To thee he came not to address his speech,
 To me he came; the answer then be mine.
 First then, I own not Creon as my lord,
 Nor deem his puissance such that by constraint

Athens must yield to this: the stream would flow
Backwards, if we must bow to his commands.
This war is not from me, who 'gainst your Thebes
March'd not with these: but to entomb the dead,
No deed of violence, no bloody contest
Offer'd your state, I deem incumbent on me,
The law of Greece preserving: what of this
Deviates from honour? Have these Argives done you
Outrage and wrong? Their lives have answer'd it,
And you have well aveng'd you on your foes,
With honour to yourselves, and shame to them:
Here vengeance ends. Permit then that the dead
Be in the earth entomb'd. Each various part,
That constitutes the frame of man, returns
Whence it was taken: to th' ethereal sky
The soul, the body to its earth: of all
Nought, save this breathing space of life, our own:
The earth then, which sustain'd it when alive,
Ought to receive it dead. These rites denied,
On Argos is thy vengeance stamp'd? Not so:
It is a common cause, and all Greece feels it,
If to the dead refused, what to the dead
Is due, the common rites of sepulture.
This law, if ratified, would cause the brave
To shrink from danger. With harsh menaces
To me thou comest: and why? Fear you the dead
If they find burial in the ground? What fear?
Would they dig through your earth, if there entomb'd?
Or in those dark recesses procreate sons
To rise in vengeance on you? Wayward this,
And waste of words to talk of fears you own
Idle and vain. Go, shallow men, and learn
The state of man: Life is a theatre,
Where each essays the contest; early some
Have held the prize, some now, hereafter some,
And fortune plays the wanton; by the wretched

622. The translator here follows the very ingenious emendation and interpretation of Markland.

Greatly revered, that she may favour him;
 And by the happy held in honour high,
 Who dreads the veering gale. Behoves it then
 The injur'd, knowing this, to bear their wrongs
 With govern'd temper; and not do a deed,
 Pursuing vengeance, that shall hurt the state.
 How shall this be? Permit us, who revere
 Religion's rites, t' inter the slaughter'd dead:
 If not, what must ensue is evident.

I march with speed, and will by force inter them.
 This 'mongst the Grecians never shall be bruited,
 That an old law, which from the gods receiv'd
 Its sanction, fled to me, who reign where once
 Pandion reign'd, yet suffer'd violation.

CHOR. Be firm: for guarding thus the light of justice,
 Know thou wilt check the tongue of obloquy.

TH. HER. Wilt thou I hold brief conference with thee?

THES. Speak freely: of thy words thou art not sparing.

TH. HER. Ne'er shalt thou take these Argives from our land.

THES. Now, if it like thee, hear what I reply.

TH. HER. I wish to hear: thou hast a right to speak.

THES. These dead, from Thebes recover'd, I will bury.

TH. HER. First thou must dare to meet opposing shields.

THES. Oft have I dared encounter greater toils.

TH. HER. Art thou then born ensured a match for all?

THES. For all the bad: no terror to the good.

TH. HER. In much hast thou engag'd, thou and thy state.

THES. Her labours great, and thence her glories high.

TH. HER. Come then, our glebe-sprung sons shall lay thee low.

THES. What, from your dragon springs a furious Mars?

TH. HER. Fierce as thou art, thy chastisements shall teach thee.

THES. Thou shalt not urge me by thy vaunting words
 To an unseemly passion: but begone,
 And bear thy insolent folly back with thee.—

Our words avail not: forward then in arms
 With speedy march; and you, that mount the car,

And bounding steed, light shake the waving rein,
 Till the foam whitens o'er the fields of Thebes.
 To their seven gates will I advance, myself
 My herald. But to thee I give in charge,
 Stay here; my hand shall bear the keen-edg'd sword,
 Adrastus, nor with mine thy fortunes blend.
 My guardian god attending, I will lead
 This brave train, glorious with my glorious spear.
 I urge but one request, to have with me
 The pow'rs that favour justice: for these things
 Conjoin'd give conquest: vain in mortal man
 Is courage, if the gods deny their aid.

* ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

- ADR. Ye wretched mothers of the wretched chiefs,
 What dismal terrors sicken at my heart!
 CHOR. What new discomfort doth thy voice intend?
 ADR. Soon shall the warlike train of Pallas march.
 CHOR. This shall the spear decide, or friendly speech?
 ADR. This were my wish, but o'er the land again
 Battles shall rage, and slaughter drench'd with blood,
 And frenetic grief beating its anguish'd breast.
 CHOR. Ah me, what thoughts, what judgment may I form?

* Tyrwhitt with great reason gives to Adrastus through this scene the part usually assigned to Æthra, who went to Athens with Theseus, and came to Eleusis no more.

674. This, and the following line, speak anxiety for the event.

679. ὦν πάλαινα, τίνα λόγον,

Τίν' ἂν τῶνδ' αἰτίαν λάβοιμι; v. 606.

This is passed over by all the annotators; but the translator feels its difficulty: it cannot mean, "what words shall I utter, whom shall I charge as the cause of these things?" That was too well known to admit a question: if it means, "how shall I form my reasoning on these things?" to this the answer of Adrastus is direct, "some fate may again sink him (Creon) who is now illustrious in his good fortune." So Mr. Heath explains the passage. To this the Chorus says, "You speak of the gods as if they regarded justice:" the Chorus here, as Markland observes, like persons suffering under misfortunes, thought ill of the gods; but afterwards, when Creon was defeated, they could exclaim, "Now I believe that there are gods." The reply of Adrastus is sober and religious, "And who but they dispense afflictions?" The Chorus, still querulous and

ADR. Bright as he is with conquest, fortune soon
May strip him of his glories: this high hope
Rises to confidence.

CHOR. These words bespeak
The justice of the gods.

ADR. And who but they
Dispense afflictions?

CHOR. Oft have I observ'd
Various to mortal man the ways of heav'n.

ADR. Thy former sufferings sink thy heart with fear.
Vengeance hath call'd for vengeance, blood for blood:
Such respite from their ills the gods dispense
To mortals; but th' event of all is theirs.

CHORUS.

STRO. How shall I reach thy tow' red plain,
How leave, Callichorus, thy hallow'd fount?
Could I on rapid pinions mount,
And to those rampires urge my flight amain,
Where deep Ismenus rolls his tide,
And Dirce's gentle waters glide,
There might I see amidst that hostile ground
The doubted fortune of my friends;
What fate their generous arms attends; [crown'd.
There see this valiant king, perchance, with conquest

ANTIS. For this again I pour my pray'r:
In all the fears that rend my anxious breast,
This to the tumult whispers rest.
Hear then, almighty Jove, thy suppliant hear!
By wand'ring Iö's form divine,
The mighty mother of our line,
Protect this town, its arms with glory grace;

distrustful, answer, "I have observed that the dispensations of the gods to men
"are various;" that is, that the innocent are often involved in afflictions, the
guilty often advanced to honour. Adrastus imputes these sentiments to their
fears arising from their former sufferings; and says that vengeance now calls for
vengeance, and the gods direct the event. Markland thought this deserved an
explanation.

696. The translator follows the happy corrections of Heath and Markland.

Then from thy shrine, eternal king,
 These hands thy sculptur'd form shall bring,
 And nigh the blazing pyre th' insulted image place.

MESSANGER, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

MESS. Ye dames of Argos, much have I to speak
 Of grateful import. Captive in the battle,
 When on the banks of Dirce fought the troops
 Of the seven chiefs there slain, my liberty
 Regain'd, I haste to tell you that the arms
 Of Theseus are victorious. To cut short
 All question, I to Capaneus was servant,
 Whom with his flaming thunder Jove consumed.

CHOR. Thus far, my friend, thy tidings give us joy,
 Joy for thy freedom, and the victory
 Of Theseus: tell us that th' Athenian troops
 Are safe, that news would give us joy indeed.

MESS. Safe; and achiev'd all which I wish Adrastus
 Had well achiev'd when his embattled Argives
 He led from Inachus to war at Thebes.

CHOR. How did the son of Ægeus, and the troops
 That with him shook the spear, to Jove erect
 The trophies? Tell us, for eye-witness thou
 With the relation canst delight our ears.

MESS. Bright was the day, and the sun's mounted beam
 Shone on the earth, when at th' Electran gates
 High on a tow'r I stood, the view around
 Commanding; thence three marching hosts I see

707. Cum nesciam sensum hujus et duorum sequentium versuum, ponam solummodo Barnesii notam ad ver. 633. "Quia Thebani ad preces Argivarum matronarum non remittebant filiorum cadavera ad sepeliendum, et Jovem Supplicem ideo tempsisse videbantur, dicit se Chorus Jovis statuam ad aram prolaturum; ut sic illum vindictæ memorem reddat contra Thebanos." Paria fere Brodæus, quæ vera esse possunt: sed non intelligo, nec certiora dare possum, forte ex ignorantia moris alienjus ad quem hic respici potest.

Had Dr. Musgrave reflected that ΤΟ ΣΟΝ ἄγαλμα, ΤΟ ΣΟΝ ἱδρυμα necessarily refer to a statue of Jupiter, he would have spared his own explanation, nor have said, nulla hic difficultas, quæ Marklandum, tantæ eruditionis virum, morari debuit.

All clad in martial arms: stretching above
Ismenus, nigh its bank, as fame had spread
Th' alarm, th' illustrious son of Ægeus march'd,
And with him marshall'd on the right the sons
Of old Cecropia; near the fount of Mars
Form'd on the left stood Paralus: the horse
In firm array were rang'd, equal in number,
Skirting the infantry: the whirling cars
Below Amphion's honour'd tomb were placed.
Before their rampires stood the troops of Thebes,
(The dead, for whom this work of war begun,
Drawn backwards,) horse to horse, and car to car,
In armed opposition. Now advanc'd
An herald, and from Theseus thus his words
Address'd to all, " Silence, ye crowds; ye troops,
" The progeny of Cadmus, silence: hear.
" T' inter the dead, guarding the general law
" Of Greece, we come: no hostile wish is ours
" Of spreading carnage." No reply was giv'n
From Creon; but in arms he held his station
Silent. And now the chiefs that whirl'd the cars
Began the battle, and before the van
Advancing, placed their combatants arrang'd
With ported spears; these fought in arms, and those
Against th' opponents boldly turn'd their cars.
This Phorbas saw, who led the light-rein'd horse,
The chariots 'gainst th' Athenian chariots whirl'd,
And forwards moved: t' oppose him rush'd the horse
Of Thebes, to conflict, victory, and defeat.
These things I heard not from report, but saw
The deeds, there standing where in conflict met
The chariots and their warriors. Horror there
Wore various forms: which first shall I relate?
The clouds of dust dark rolling to the skies;
Or tangled in their harness charioteers
Whirl'd to and fro; or streams of gushing blood
The ground empurpling? From the shatter'd cars
Some were dash'd headlong to the earth, some died

Mangled with wounds beneath the shiver'd wheels.
 When Creon saw his horse in adverse fight
 Engaged, he snatch'd his shield, and, e'er a foil
 Might damp their ardour, with his troop advanc'd.
 Nor was the firm battalion led by Theseus
 Quell'd with dismay; but all in glitt'ring arms
 Move onward, and with furious expedition
 Charging the centre slew, were slain; with shouts
 Each animated each to press the foe.
 In dreadful conflict wav'd the Theban spear;
 Bold were the warriors of the dragon race.
 Our left gave way, but from our right their troops
 Recoil'd; in even scale the battle hung.
 Here the chief claims our praise; not satisfied
 With what he won, he hasten'd to his troops
 That shrunk o'er-match'd in fight; and with a voice
 That made the earth resound, thus call'd aloud,
 "Dauntless, ye youths, sustain the thund'ring shock
 "Of this bold dragon race, or ruin waits
 "The state of Pallas:" through the host his words
 Breath'd courage: taking then his dreadful arms,
 His Epidaurian mace, he whirl'd it high,
 Now here, now there; where'er it smote, the force
 Crush'd helm and head wide-wasting: yet e'en thus
 With all his warlike toil scarce could he turn
 This firm array to flight. I leap'd for joy,
 And shouted: tow'rd the gates they stretch'd their flight.
 Through all the city cries and loud laments
 Resounded; wild with fear the young, the old
 Crowd to the temples; and th' unguarded gates
 Gave ready entrance: but the noble Theseus
 Declared, preventing this, I came not hither

792. Theseus, being excited by the example and glory of Hercules, determined to go forth and free the world from fierce and savage oppressors. He was stopped in Epidauria by Periphetes, with whom he fought, and slew him: his club he ever after used as his own weapon; that as Hercules wore the lion's skin to shew how vast a monster he had subdued, so he bore this club which he won in fight, and which with him would be invincible. *Plut. Life of Theseus.*

To waste the town, but to request the dead.
 Choose then a chief of valour to sustain
 Ill fortune, and repress that insolence
 Which leads a people with success elate,
 Seeking to mount the ladder's topmost height,
 To fall, and ruin all their former glories.

CHOR. Seeing this day beyond my hopes, I know
 That there are gods; and deem my share of woes
 The lighter, vengeance thus repaid on them.

ADR. Why, king of gods, to wretched mortals why
 The name of wise? On thee we all depend,
 And what thy will we act. Our force we deem'd
 Resistless, glorying in our youthful arms,
 And numbers; hence rejecting with disdain
 What overtures Eteocles proposed
 Of composition, nor unfair nor harsh:
 And hence our ruin. He, who triumph'd then,
 Like some poor wretch with sudden wealth enrich'd,
 Grew insolent: and for their insolence
 Th' ill-spirited Thebans in their turn are ruin'd.
 The vanity of men! Beyond the mark
 They aim their shafts; and suffering many ills
 With justice, scorn th' advice of friends, but learn
 From the severe event. E'en so these states,
 Which might by friendly conference have stay'd
 These ills, chose rather to pursue their course
 Through slaughter. But no more. I wish to learn
 First of thy safety: much enquiry follows.

MESS. 'Midst the disorder of th' affrighted town,
 Those gates I pass'd through which the troops had enter'd.

ADR. Bear you the dead, for whom this conflict rose?

MESS. The chieftains of the sev'n illustrious bands.

ADR. And where the rest, the undistinguish'd slain?

MESS. All in Cithæron's winding vales interr'd.

ADR. On that side, or on this? Who buried them?

837. By this question Adrastus wished to be informed whether they were buried in the Theban or Athenian territories: the answer is satisfactory, for Eleutheris was at that time united to the dominions of Athens.

- MESS. Theseus, where dark Eleutheris hangs o'er them.
 ADR. Where, hast'ning didst thou leave th' unburied dead?
 MESS. Near: for whate'er is done with zeal, is nigh.
 ADR. Bore not the slaves reluctantly the slain?
 MESS. This task no slave perform'd: thou wou'dst have said,
 Hadst thou been present, that he loved the dead.
 ADR. Cleans'd he with lavers pure their putrid wounds?
 MESS. And spread their biers, and cover'd them with robes.
 ADR. A grievous task, and not devoid of shame.
 MESS. What, in the ills of man to man what shame?
 ADR. Wretch that I am, O had I di'd with them!
 MESS. Thy grief is vain; but draws the tear from these.
 ADR. I know it: but from these my eyes first learn'd
 To drop the tear. No more then. I will meet
 With hands uprais'd the dead, and in sad notes
 Pour the funereal strain, hailing my friends,
 Whose loss hath left me desolate to mourn
 My melancholy state: this loss alone
 Man never can redeem, the life of man:
 All other treasures lost may be regain'd.

CHORUS.

- STRO. Yes, we have cause to pour the tear,
 And cause to bid our joys resound:
 From the stern contest of the spear
 The chiefs return with conquest crown'd,
 And glory to the state and triumph bring.
 But, ah, what griefs this breast must sting!
 How shall the mother's gushing eyes
 Weep o'er her son, as pale in death he lies!
 Yet after all my sorrows past,
 Pointed by misery's keenest pow'r,
 One gleam of mournful comfort shines at last,
 To see this unexpected hour.
- ANTIS. Time, ancient father, hadst thou led
 Lonely my steps life's journey through,
 A stranger to the nuptial bed!
 For what with sons had I to do?

Then never had I fear'd this storm of fate,
Never in that calm virgin state
Have suffer'd this severest pain,
My son's pale corse stretch'd on the bloody plain.
And see, the sad attendants guide
This way the solemn pomp of death :

O with my dying son that I had died,
Sunk to the common realms beneath !

ADR. Raise, ye mothers, o'er the slain,
Loudly raise the mournful strain ;
Deep and solemn let it flow,
Echoing to my notes of woe.

CHOR. O my son ! that greeting dear,
Calls the wretched mother's tear ;
Must I then with accent dread,
My loved, lost son, address thee dead !

ADR. By my griefs I sink oppress.

CHOR. Grief's keen tortures pierce my breast.

ADR. Imperial Argos, see my ruthless fate !

CHOR. And see a childless mother's wretched state !

ADR. Here my aching eyes before
Place the bodies dropping gore.
Vilely by the vile o'erthrown,
In you the work of death is done.

CHOR. Give me, yielding to my woe,
Round his corse my arms to throw ;
Bathing with my tears his face,
To clasp him with a fond embrace.

ADR. Thou hast, thou hast that sad relief:
Full is now thy load of grief.

CHOR. To a parent this address !
Yet for both grief wounds thy breast.

ADR. O that at Thebes beneath the hostile sword
My blood had on the hostile ground been pour'd !

CHOR. O had I ne'er been led, by love allied,
To grace the nuptial couch a willing bride !

ADR. See, ye wretched mothers, round
Rolls a sea of ills profound !

CHOR. See, these cheeks I rend, and spread
Ashes o'er this hoary head !

ADR. Burst, thou hollow ground, and deep
Sink me down the yawning steep !
Rise, ye storms, with furious sway,
Whirl me from the earth away !
Flash, ye flames, ye thunders roar,
On my head your vengeance pour !

CHOR. Fatal nuptials were thy choice :
Fatal was Apollo's voice :
Fatal was the hour, when thus
From the house of Œdipus
Fraught with ruin, fraught with woe,
Erinnys came to thee a foe.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THESE. I would have ask'd thee, when before the troops
Thou pour'dst thy lamentation : but no more
Of thy affairs : my further question now
Address I to Adrastus. Whence were these,
That shone illustrious for their gallant spirit ?
Tell me, as far exceeding these young men
In knowledge : I have seen their bold attempts,
Beyond the praise of words, whereby they ween'd
To win the city. Be it far from me
To ask, what were ridiculous and vain,
Whom each engaged in fight, what hostile spear
The wound inflicted : common rumours these,
Which to his list'ning audience each relates,
Who held a station in the ranks of war :
And, though before his eyes the hurtling spears
Flew thick, distinctly tells whose deeds were brave.
These things I ask not, nor to those who dare
Make such relations can my ears give credit.
For in the shock of warring hosts the eye

932. In this expedition he had seen the fortifications of Thebes, and the strength of the gates which they attacked. *Musgrave.*

Scarce sees what most the dreadful time requires.

ADR. That thou hast mention'd thus my friends with honour
Is grateful to me: I will speak of them
What truth and justice claims. Thou seest this form
Of princely dignity, though deep intrench'd
With vollied thunders: this was Capaneus:
Large were his riches, but his soul disdain'd
The arrogance of wealth, nor knew a thought
Above the humble rank of poverty:
Him, who in costly viands placed his pride,
And held the frugal board in scorn, he shunn'd;
Nor thought voluptuous luxury his good,
Pleading that nature's wants are soon sufficed:
Faithful in friendship, to the present faithful,
And to the absent, though of these th' amount
Is small; of manners simple, and in words
Courteous; his promise, were it to the state,
Or his dependents, fail'd not of effect.
Behold the next: this was Eteoclus,
He too of virtue studious; few his years,
Small his possessions, but the Argive state
Held him in highest honour: when his friends
Presented him with gold, he in his house
Receiv'd it not, as tending to subdue
His mind enslaved to wealth: a foe to those
Whose deeds were base, not to the public weal;
For oft the state, in nothing blameable,
For an ill ruler hears itself reviled.
Such was the third of these, Hippomedon;
For him, whilst yet a youth, the gentle muse
Had no delight, as to inactive ease
Training the mind; but in the fields his joy,
In hardihood, and manly exercise;
To tame the fiery steed, to lead the chase,
To bend the bow his glory; thus by toils
Forming his limbs firm in his country's cause.
This too, the huntress Atalanta's son,
Parthenopæus, yet a youth, his form

Of unmatch'd beauty: an Arcadian he;
 Thence to the streams of Inachus he came,
 And form'd his youth at Argos; there receiv'd,
 As well becomes a stranger, to the state
 He caus'd no trouble, no offence: in words
 Never contentious, which disgusts in all,
 Native, or foreign: in his post in arms
 He stood the guardian of the country, firm
 As if at Argos born; in all her glories
 He felt a generous joy, and deeply griev'd
 If ills assail'd her: loved by all, but most
 By many a wishing fair, with watchful guard
 He kept himself from each unseemly deed.
 The praise of Tydeus shall be summ'd in brief,
 Though great: no pomp of wordsflow'd from his tongue,
 But, dreadful with his shield, the various works
 Of war he knew: in the mild arts of peace
 Inferior to his brother Meleager,
 With the bold spear he equal'd his renown,
 Skill'd in the music of the clashing shield;
 Rich in a soul like his athirst for glory,
 In speech less graceful, but in noble deeds
 His equal. From such praise due to my friends,
 Marvel not, Theseus, that before the walls
 They dared to die: a generous education
 Inspires an honest shame: the brave man, train'd
 To high exploits, would blush when danger calls
 To be found recreant: valour may be taught,
 E'en as we teach a child to speak, to hear,
 What, till so taught, he knows not; and such lore
 The man with fondness to old age retains:
 Incitement strong to train your children well.

CHOR. Alas, my son, to an ill fate I train'd thee,
 To an ill fate I bore thee. Pluto now
 Hath all, for which a wretched mother felt
 A mother's throes; and I, O woe! who bore
 A son, have now no son to cheer my age.

ADR. The generous son of Oicles, by the gods

Snatch'd down the yawning gulf alive with all
 His harness'd steeds and chariot, hath from them
 Evident praise. Should I with honour name
 The son of Œdipus, truth and his worth
 Would ratify the praise of Polynices:
 For long e'er from the Theban state he came
 A voluntary exile, he had been
 My guest at Argos. But vouchsafe to know
 Touching these dead what more I wish from thee.

THES. Whate'er it be, my will is prompt to grant it.

ADR. This Capaneus, struck by the flames of Jove——

THES. Should he, a sacred corse, be tomb'd apart?

ADR. E'en so: the rest placed on one common pyre.

THES. Where raise the separate monument for him?

ADR. Here, nigh this sacred temple, raise his tomb.

THES. This charge to the attendants be assign'd;
 And these be mine. Advance the pomp of death.

ADR. Go then, ye wretched mothers, near your sons.

THES. Not so, Adrastus; misbecoming that.

ADR. Ought not the mothers' hands to touch their sons?

THES. To view them in this ghastly change would raise
 Distraction: dreadful to the sight is death,
 When new: why wou'dst thou aggravate their woe?

ADR. Thy words have reason. Stay with patience then;
 Theseus says well: when to the funeral pile
 Their bodies are consign'd, it shall be yours
 To bear their bones away. Unhappy mortals,
 Why forge the spear? Why spread the mutual carnage?

1032. *Θάπτειν*, as Markland well observes, was the common word to express the last office to the dead body, however it was disposed of; he produces several instances: here it signifies cremare; so it is used v. 17, 130, 174, 385, 526, 559, 671. Barnes cites Roman customs for Grecian, and then accuses the poet of inconsistency. Carmeli improves upon this, Non erat itaque ab Euripide mentio facienda rogi Capanei. Finxit tamen rogum poeta, in quo jam Capaneus non erat, ut mortem Evadne commonstraret, quæ tantopere maritum deperiit, ut scse in rogum morituram coniecerit.

1035. For *παρ' οἴκτου τέρσας*, v. 938, Reiskius reads *οἴκου τέρσας*: so Tyrwhitt, Markland, and Musgrave: this emendation is necessary to preserve the unity of place, and that the mothers, staying in the area of the temple, might be present at the next scene.

Forbear: and ceasing from your ruinous toils
 Peaceful amidst the peaceful save your towns.
 Short is the space of life: behoves us then
 With ease to pass it, not with rugged toil.

CHORUS.

- STRO. No more with son, with offspring blest,
 A mother's name no more I bear;
 Amidst the Argive dames my breast
 No more a parent's joy shall share.
 Lucina, lenient of a mother's throes,
 Shall greet the childless name no more,
 But leave me lonely to deplore
 Through cheerless life my sickly woes:
 For, like a cloud that flits along the sky,
 Before the driving blast I fly.
- ANTIS. Sev'n mothers once of honour'd name,
 Sev'n sons, distracting thought! we bore;
 Applauding Argos hail'd their fame;
 But those sev'n sons are now no more.
 The gloom of desolation dark'ning round,
 Affliction with malignant rage
 Bends to the earth our wretched age,
 And anguish rends the bleeding wound.
 Nor 'mongst the living, nor the dead, our fate
 Demands apart a lonely state.
- EPOD. Of my son his house bereft,
 Nought to me, save tears, is left;
 And those monuments of woe,
 On the dead which we bestow;
 Locks, from these hoar temples shorn;
 Chaplets, framed his brows t' adorn;
 Measures, harsh t' Apollo's ear,
 Radiant with his golden hair.
 With the rising morn my sighs
 Wake to tears my melting eyes;
 Down my bosom, down my stole
 Still the moist'ning streams shall roll.

CHOR. And now the pyre of Capaneus I see ;
 And there without the gates the sacred tomb
 By Theseus rais'd, sad honour to the dead.
 Th' illustrious wife of him, who by the stroke
 Of thunder fell transfix'd, Evadne nigh,
 Daughter of aged Iphis. Why this way
 Advancing, on the rock's aerial height,
 That overlooks this dome, takes she her stand?

EVADNE, CHORUS.

STROPHE.

EV. Where now the golden flood of light
 Roll'd from the glorious-beaming orb of day?
 Where the moon's silver-waving ray,
 That to her swift train riding through the night
 Spread her pale lustre through the air;
 What time, the festive joy to share,
 Applauding Argos join'd my nuptial train,
 And swell'd the high exstatic strain,
 Hailing in votive verse the bride,
 With Capaneus, their hero, at my side?
 Now raving from my house I came,
 Bent to partake my lost lord's doom,
 To share with him the funeral flame,
 With him to sink into the tomb,
 With him to Pluto's dark abodes to go,
 There end a toilsome life of woe:
 Sweetest the death, if ratified on high,
 Together with our dying friends to die.

CHOR. There from thy rocky station dost thou see
 That pyre, the sacred right of Jove, where lies
 Thy husband, by the thunder's flame subdued?

ANTISTROPHE.

EV. I see my end: for this I came.

1112. This refers to l. 1032. Both Grecians and Romans esteemed persons struck with lightning as sacred; but the laws of Greece did not prohibit their bodies to be burned.

For this the station of this rock I chose :
 The tangling fates around me close.
 Hence will I throw me, led by honest fame,
 And headlong from this cliff's steep brow
 Plunge in the flaming pile below.
 With my loved lord's my body shall be laid ;
 And, as the flames around us spread,
 My corse with his dear corse shall join,
 Pleas'd thus to tread the courts of Proserpine.
 Thee, though the iron hand of death
 Hath seiz'd thy livid limbs his prey,
 Never shall thy Evadne's breath,
 In fondness for this earth betray.
 Bright sun, farewell : farewell my nuptial bed :
 Happier in Argos be thou spread :
 My generous lord glow'd with love's purest fire :
 And with him shall the generous wife expire.

CHOR. But see, thy father, aged Iphis, near
 Advances : thy last words, if unexpected
 They hit his ear, will fill his soul with grief.

IPHIS, EVADNE, CHORUS.

IPH. O thou unhappy ! I too in mine age
 Unhappy ; from the gods a double grief
 Lies on me : to his country would I bear
 My son, who by the Theban spear was slain,
 Eteoclus ; my daughter too I seek ;
 She disappear'd at once, leaving my house
 With abrupt flight, the wife of Capaneus,
 To die with her dead husband her warm wish.
 My care was watchful o'er her, and awhile
 Prevented this ; but, through these pressing ills
 My vigilance suspended, she escaped,
 Most likely hither : if you know, inform me.

EV. Why ask of them, my father ? on this rock,
 Like some poor bird, I hover o'er the pyre
 Of Capaneus, a wretch, and soon to fall.

IPH. My child, what impulse this ? Ah, why this dress ?

- My house why left: why hither art thou come?
- EV. Soon might'st thou reach the purport of my soul,
Hearing it: but I wish thee not to hear it.
- IPH. Is it not just then that thy father know it?
- EV. No fair judge thou of what my thoughts intend.
- IPH. But why with all this rich array adorn'd?
- EV. To something noble this rich dress preludes.
- IPH. Ill suits it one that o'er an husband mourns.
- EV. But for some new intent am I array'd.
- IPH. What, at this tomb, this pyre to shew thyself?
- EV. There lies the conquest, which I come to win.
- IPH. Conquest! what conquest? That I wish to learn.
- EV. O'er all the wives yon sun hath e'er beheld.
- IPH. In prudence, or in richly-tissued work?
- EV. In virtue: with my husband laid in death.
- IPH. Some senseless riddle this: what may it mean?
- EV. Hence to the pyre of Capaneus I plunge.
- IPH. My daughter, let not many hear such words.
- EV. It is my wish that every Argive heard them.
- IPH. To such a deed I never will consent.
- EV. It matters not; thou canst not reach me here.
Now plunge I headlong down; to thee my fall
Not pleasing, but to me, and to my husband,
Thus join'd in death, and in one funeral pile.
- CHOR. Ah, lady, what a dreadful deed is this!
- IPH. Woe, ruin, horror! O ye Argive dames!
- CHOR. Alas, alas thy miseries, suff'ring this,
A deed of dreadful daring in thy sight!
- IPH. Can there be found a grief to equal this?
- CHOR. Alas thy suff'rings! Thou hast lived to share
The fortunes of th' unhappy Œdipus
In thine old age, thou and my wretched country.
- IPH. Ah, why is it denied to mortal man
Twice to be young, and thence return again
To hoary age? For in domestic business

If aught be ill conducted, after thought
May counsel better; but in life this pow'r
We have not. Might we twice be young, twice old,
Such double age would give us room t' amend
What was amiss. Observing other houses
Flourish with children, I grew fond of them,
And wish'd to be a father: had I known,
Had I experienc'd what a father feels
When of a child bereav'd, I had not fallen
Into this present woe. I wish'd, I gain'd
A son with every excellence adorn'd;
Of him I am bereav'd. Then be it so.
What shall this wretch now do? Should I return
To my own house? Sad desolation there
I shall behold, to sink my soul with grief.
Or go I to the house of Capaneus?
That was delightful to me, when I found
My daughter there; but she is there no more:
Oft would she kiss my cheek, with fond caress
Oft sooth me: to a father waxing old
Nothing is dearer than a daughter: sons
Have spirits of higher pitch, but less inclined
To sweet endearing fondness. Lead me then,
Instantly lead me to my house, consign
My wretched age to darkness, there to waste
And pine away. Ah, what will it avail me
To grasp the ashes of my son? Old age,
Struggling with many griefs, O how I hate thee!
How I hate all, that wish to lengthen life,
Striving with nectar'd bowls and viands rare
To turn it from its current, that they die not!
Behoves them rather, since their wasted strength
In nothing serves their country, to begone,
To die, and give to youthful vigour place.

SEMI. Look there, look there; the ashes of my son
Warm from the funeral pile they bring: support me,
My female train, support my feeble age.
Grief for my son, long rankling at my heart,

Hath wasted all my strength: a greater grief
Can mortals know through all the various ills
Of life, than this, to see their children dead ?

SON, IPHIS, CHORUS.

- SON. I bring, unhappy mother, from the flames
I bring my father's relics: grief hath made
The load not light, whilst with despair I see
Shrunk to this narrow compass all my hopes.
- SEMI. Ah me ! Ah me ! Thou bringest tears, my child,
Dear to the wretched mother of the dead ;
And for the chiefs once through Mycenæ famed,
All that remains, this little heap of ashes.
- SON. And I, unhappy in my father's loss,
Deserted, in a desert house shall live
An orphan, in a parent's arms no more.
- SEMI. Where now are all a mother's nursing cares,
Her watchings o'er her son, her sleepless nights,
And the fond kiss on his dear cheek impress'd ?
- SON. All lost: thy sons too, thou sad mother, lost ;
Th' ethereal air now has them, from the flames
Nought, but this little heap of ashes, left.
Too hastily to Pluto's halls they sunk.
Yet dost thou hear, my father, my son's voice :
Shall I ne'er lift the shield, ne'er face the foe
In arms t' avenge thy slaughter ?
- IPH. O my child,
May this be so; what time the gods appoint;
May these eyes see this vengeance for thy father !
This mischief sleeps not yet.
- SON. Enough of griefs,
Enough of woes my wretched fate presents:
But I will check them. When shall I behold
With transport glitt'ring in their arms the chiefs
Of Argos, and avenge my father's death ?
E'en yet methinks I see thee, O my father,
Thy fondness yet is present to my eyes;
But thy endearing words are heard no more,

They die along the air. A double grief
Thy loss hath left, to my unhappy mother,
To thee a father's sorrows ne'er shall fail.

IPH. I feel their weight, they sink me to the ground.
O let me press his ashes to my bosom.

SON. I weep to hear thy melancholy words,
They touch me to the heart.

IPH. Thou art no more,
My son; no more shall these fond eyes behold
In thee the dear, dear image of thy mother.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, SON, CHORUS.

THES. Adrastus, and ye Argive dames, you see
Your sons hold in their hands the dear remains
Of their illustrious fathers, by my arms
Recover'd, and by me presented to them,
And by this state. Behoves you to preserve
Grateful remembrance of these benefits.
To all be these suggestions made; this state
Hold high in honour, and from age to age
Transmit the lasting memory of this grace.
Be witness, Jove, and all ye pow'rs of heav'n,
What courtesies from us receiv'd you go.

ADR. Theseus, we all are conscious what good deeds
Thy grace hath done to th' Argive state when most
It wanted grace. Indelibly this kindness
Shall on our hearts be graven: gen'rous acts
Conferr'd a grateful recompense demand.

THES. Is there aught else you wish me to effect?

1283. In illo elegantissimo et suavissimo festivissimoque sermone Horatii, quo graphice exprimitur importuni scurræ et hominis odiosissimi molestia, "num quid vis occupo" more Romano dictum est, sic enim loqui solebat, qui vel discedere ab aliquo, vel aliquem a se dimittere volebat. Terentius in Eunuchis, act. ii. scen. 3.

Rogo numquid velit. recte, inquit, abeo.

Adriani Turnebi Adversariorum, l. xv. These words of Theseus are to be understood in this sense, as dismissing the Argives: Verba valedicentis.

ADR. Farewell: that wish thou and thy state deserve.
 THES. And be the like good fortune thine: farewell.
 MIN. Hear, Theseus, hear Minerva's words, that teach thee
 What thou shou'dst do, what doing thou thy state
 May'st benefit. These ashes of the dead
 Give not their sons to bear with them to Argos,
 Dismissing them so lightly. For thy toils
 Thine and the state's Adrastus ought to give
 An oath: as lord, as king, his oath shall bind
 Argos and all its realms: Be this the oath:
 Ne'er shall the Argives 'gainst this land advance
 In hostile arms, but with the spear repel
 Th' invading foe: if 'gainst this state they march
 In violation of this oath, may Argos
 Sink in the dust with infamy. Now hear me,
 Where thou shou'dst slay the victims: in thine house
 Thou hast a brazen-footed tripod, once
 By Hercules, when Troy beneath his might
 Bow'd her high head, though hasting to achieve
 Exploits of other purpose, to the shrine
 Of Pytho vow'd: on this let three lambs bleed;
 Then on its hollow disk engrave the oath,
 And give it to the god, whose pow'r presides
 O'er Delphi, to preserve it, that to Greece
 It may remain a monument t' attest
 These oaths. This done, the sharp-edg'd sword, with which
 The victims' blood is shed, nigh the sev'n pyres
 Deep bury in the earth, that 'gainst this land
 Should they e'er march, dug up it might appal them,
 Portending rout, and a return with shame.
 These things perform'd, dismiss them, and their dead;
 And consecrate th' inclosure, where their bodies
 Blaz'd on the hallow'd flames, to her who claims
 The ground where three ways meet, the Isthmian goddess.

1317. Whoever this Isthmian goddess might be, or whatever be the sense of this passage, Mr. Heath observes, that the sacred inclosure, in which these chiefs received their last honours, was in the way by which the Argives must march in their invasion of Attica; and the tombs, nigh the road which leads from Eleusis

Thus far to thee: now to these Argive youths.
Advanc'd to manhood's prime, your arms shall waste
The city of Ismenus, and avenge
Your fathers' death. And thou, Ægialeus,
Shalt in thy father's stead, a youthful chief,
Lead on the martial train; with thee the son
Of Tydeus, from Ætolia, by his father
Named Diomedes. It is ordain'd that you,
Your cheeks scarce shaded with the manly down,
With all th' embattled troops of Argos bright
In arms, shall march 'gainst the sev'n tow'rs of Thebes;
Dreadful to them your lion race, though young:
And you shall storm the town: thus shall it be:
And, call'd through Greece Epigoni, your fame
Shall in recording strains be sounded high:
Such troops, such conquest will the gods assign you.

THES. Royal Minerva, I obey thy words;
For, led by thee, in Error's devious paths
I stray not: with this oath him will I bind:
Be thou my guide to right: if thou vouchsafe
Thy grace, our future life shall pass secure.

CHOR. Let us then go, Adrastus, and this oath
Confirm to him and to the state: their toils
Benevolent to us demand respect.

to Megara, were a monument to remind them of the kindness of the Athenians, and to upbraid them for their own ingratitude. These tumuli were remaining in the time of Pausanias.

HERCULES.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AMPHITRYON

MEGARA

LYCUS

HERCULES

IRIS

LYSSA, THE GODDESS OF MADNESS

THESEUS

MESSENGER

CHORUS OF AGED THEBANS.

HERCULES.

THE labours of Hercules are so well known to every reader, and so finely celebrated in one of the choral odes of this tragedy, that it is unnecessary to give any further account of them. His descent to the infernal regions to drag the triple-headed dog to the light of heaven must be deemed as one of his wildest adventures, if taken in the literal sense ; but the poet clearly explains its meaning, when he makes his hero, in answer to his father's questions, whether he really went to the house of Pluto, and brought the dog of hell to light, declare that he did, " for he had been so happy " as to see the sacred mysteries." His descent to hell then means his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries ; and his bringing Cerberus from thence is the knowledge he acquired by his initiation, that the terrors of those regions were imaginary and false :

Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.

Theseus and Pirithous had made this descent before, with a design, it is said, to take Proserpine from Pluto by force ; that is, they intruded into the mysteries without being initiated ; they were seized ; Pirithous was thrown to the dog Cerberus, who devoured him, that is, he was put to death ; Theseus was imprisoned

four years, till the next celebration of the mysteries, when he was released by the Hierophant at the powerful intercession of Hercules ;

Me quoque petenti munus Alcidaë dedit,

says the Theseus of Seneca. If the reader desires perfect information on this subject, let him consult *Div. Leg.* vol. i.

The first scenes of this tragedy are very affecting ; Euripides knew the way to the heart, and as often as his subject leads him to it he never fails to excite the tenderest pity : we are relieved from this distress by the unexpected appearance of Hercules, who is here drawn in his private character as the most amiable of men ; the pious son, the affectionate husband, and the tender father wins our esteem, as much as the unconquered hero raises our admiration. Here the feeling reader will perhaps wish that the drama had ended, for the next scenes are dreadful indeed, and it must be confessed that the poet has done his subject terrible justice, but without any of that absurd extravagance which in Seneca becomes un tintamarre horrible qui se passe dans le tête de ce Héros devenu fou. From the violent agitation into which we are thrown by these deeds of horror, we are suffered by degrees to subside into the tenderest grief, in which we are prepared before to sympathize with the unhappy Hercules by that esteem which his amiable disposition had raised in us ; and this perhaps is the most affecting scene of sorrow that ever was produced on any theatre. Upon the whole, though this tragedy may not be deemed the most agreeable by the generality of readers, on account of the too dreadful effects of the madness of Hercules, yet the various turns of fortune are finely managed, the

scenes of distress highly wrought, and the passions of pity, terror, and grief strongly touched. The Scene is at Thebes before the palace of Hercules.

Seneca, who took a pride in shewing how ill he could write on subjects that had been finely treated by Euripides, has exerted himself with wonderful alacrity to spoil some of the finest scenes of this drama: but the criticism of P. Brumoy on his tragedy, except the approbation of the part where Lycus offers love to Megara, which is more agreeable to French than to Grecian manners, shews so much good sense and true taste, that nothing needs to be added to it.

HERCULES.

AMPHITRYON, MEGARA, CHORUS.

AMPH. **L**IVES there a man to whom the Argive chief
Amphitryon, partner of the bed of Jove,
Is not well known? Alcæus was his sire
From Perseus sprung, and Hercules his son.
He held his seat in Thebes, where from the earth
Up rose the dragon race, of whom but few
Mars spared: their great descendants in the tow'rs
Of Cadmus flourish'd; Creon of their line,
Son of Meneceus, of this land was king,
And father of Megara, whom you see:
To her the sons of Thebes attuned their flutes
And hymeneal hymns, when to my house
Th' illustrious Hercules with festive joy
Led her his bride. But Thebes, my residence,
And this Megara, and th' alliance form'd
Through her my son soon left, with strong desire
To fix his seat at Argos, and the tow'rs
Rais'd by the Cyclops: exiled thence I fly,
My hapless hand stain'd with Electryon's blood.

18. These were architects, who attended Prætus when he returned out of Asia. Among other works, with which they adorned Greece, were the walls of Mycenæ (Musgrave) and Tiryns, which were built of unhewn stones, so large that two mules yoked could not move the smallest of them. *Pausan. Corinth.*

19. Mestor and Electryon were sons of Perseus: Hippothoe was the daughter of Mestor by Lysidice daughter of Pelops; she bore Taphius by Neptune: Pterelaus was his son. Whilst Electryon and Taphius reigned at Mycenæ, the sons of Pterelaus demanded the kingdom, as descended from Lysidice: the sons of Electryon opposed their claim: a battle ensued, in which six of the seven sons of Pterelaus, and all the sons of Electryon, except Licymnius who was very young, were slain. The Taphians, who survived the battle, drove away some heifers the

T' alleviate my misfortunes, and t' inhabit,
 What much he wish'd, his country, high rewards
 He to Eurystheus offer'd, e'en to tame
 Whate'er of savage then annoy'd the earth,
 Whether by Juno prompted, or the Fates.
 The other toils with glory he achiev'd;
 But for the last, to Pluto's drear abode
 Through the dark jaws of Tænarus he went,
 To drag the triple-headed dog to light:
 Thence he returns not. Yet in Thebes remains
 The fame of times of old, that Lycus once
 Wedded to Dirce held his awful reign
 O'er the sev'n tow'rs of Thebes, before the Sons
 Of Jove, Amphion and his brother Zethus,
 Mounted on steeds that toss'd their silver manes,
 Were monarchs of the land. His son, who bears
 His father's name, no Theban, but to Thebes
 Sent from Eubœa, while amidst this state
 Discord rag'd high, slew Creon, and now holds
 The empire. We, to Creon's blood allied,
 Thence draw our greatest miseries: for, my son
 Now in the darksome caves below, this king,
 The potent Lyeus, wishes to destroy
 The sons of Hercules, to slay his wife,
 And, that by murder murder may be quench'd,
 Me too, a weak old man, if yet 'mongst men
 I may be number'd; lest, should time advance
 Their age to manhood, for their grandsire's blood
 Their vengeance should be rous'd. I, for my son,
 When down the earth's dark steep he took his way,
 Left me to guard his children and his house,

property of Electryon, and committed them to the charge of Polyxenus king of the Eleans, from whom Amphitryon, who had married Alcmena the daughter of Electryon, recovered them. As he was driving them back, one ran from the herd; at this he threw a large staff, which he chanced to have in his hand; the staff glancing from her horn struck the head of Electryon, and killed him. *Apollodor. Bibliothec.* l. 2.

31. See the Phœniss. l. 666. n

To save them from impending ruin, here
 Sit, with their mother, at this altar rais'd
 To Jove the high Preserver, which my son
 Erected as a generous monument
 Of his victorious spear, when his strong arm
 Subdued the Minyæ. To this seat we fly
 For refuge, wanting all things, food and drink,
 And raiment, on the bare uncover'd ground
 Our limbs reclining; for our house close shut
 Against us, here we sit in deep despair
 Of safety. Of my friends there are, I see,
 Who were not such; and they, who are indeed
 My friends, want pow'r to succour me: 'mongst men
 Such is the influence of calamity,
 Which never may he know, whose thoughts intend
 E'en the least good to me; it proves false friends.

MEG. Thou venerable man, who glorious once
 In arms, the leader of the Theban force,
 In dreadful ruin laid'st the Taphian tow'rs,
 What darkness hides the counsels of the gods
 From mortal eyes! To me no joy devolves
 From all my father's fortune; yet he once
 Was blest with all the pride of wealth; he once
 Had empire, which inflamed the ported spear
 To rage against the bosom of the great;
 He once had children: me he fondly gave
 In marriage to thy son, th' illustrious wife
 Of Hercules; these blessings in his death
 Vanish'd at once; now thou and I must die,
 These too, the sons of Hercules, must die,

56. The Thebans had been tributary to Erginus king of the Minyæ: Hercules, meeting his ambassadors going to demand this tribute, treated them very roughly, and drove them back to Orchomenus. Erginus, exasperated at this affront, advanced in arms against Thebes: Hercules met him, defeated his army, and compelled the Minyæ to pay the Thebans a double tribute: for this heroic action Creon gave him his eldest daughter Megara in marriage. *Apollodor. Bibliothec.*

69. Amphitryon, to revenge the death of the sons of Electryon, had carried on the war against the Taphians, called also Telebœans, and demolished their towns.

Whom, like the parent bird that in her nest
Sits on her unfledg'd young, beneath my wings
I shelter: these alternate question me,
Where is our father? whither is he gone?
What is he doing? when will he return?
Thus droops their feeble age, thus they require
Their parent: to divert their minds I speak
The words of comfort, and admiring see,
Oft as the gates resound, their ready feet
Start forward, at their father's knees to fall.
But now what hope of safety doth thy age
Deem easy? for on thee my eyes are fix'd.
For neither from this land by secret flight
Can we escape, each avenue is held
By guards too strong for us; nor in our friends
Remains an hope: if aught thy thoughts suggest,
Propose it; let not instant death o'ertake us,
Weak as we are, we would protract the time.

AMPH. Daughter, it is no slight nor easy task
T' accomplish this: it asks most serious heed.

MEG. Is there one sorrow wanting to thy store?
Or is the light of life so grateful to thee?

AMPH. I joy in heav'n's sweet light, and cherish hope.

MEG. And I: yet vain is hope, where hope must fail.

AMPH. In their delays ills find a remedy.

MEG. The space between is mournful, and afflicts me.

AMPH. Some prosp'rous course may yet be open'd to us,
T' escape these evils that inclose us round:
My son perchance, thy husband, may return.
But cease thy plaints, and from thy children's eyes
Dry those tear-flowing founts, speak comfort to them,
A soothing, but a wretched fallacy:
For e'en afflictions waste away, their force
To mortal man abated; nor for ever
Holds the rude whirlwind his impetuous rage:
And those, whom fortune favours with her smiles,
Share not those smiles unceasing to the end.
His worth shines forth the brightest, who in hope

Always confides: the abject soul despairs.

CHOR. The vaulted roof I leave, the couch of age,

Whilst my weak steps this staff sustains,

Like the hoar bird, with fears of ill presage

I come to pour the mournful strains.

Nothing, save words, is left me now,

A lifeless vision of the night I seem,

The phantom of a dream,

Though trembling these, yet friendly shall they flow.

Unhappy orphans, for no more

You know a father's guardian pow'r:

Thou poor old man: and thou afflicted dame,

How is thy heart with bitter anguish pain'd

For thy lost lord in Pluto's house detain'd!

Nay, hurry not my feeble frame,

As up the craggy steep

You lash'd the coursers foaming at the car:

Faintly and slowly on I creep:

And, as with step infirm I tread,

Gently this heavy burden lead;

Support me by the robe and by the hand,

Thy age my failing age shall bear.

There was a time, when 'midst the youthful band

First in the labours of the well-fought field

I grasp'd the youthful spear, and rais'd the shield;

Nor in my country's fierce alarms

Disgrac'd her glorious arms.

Behold these boys; how stern their brow,

Their father's spirit flashing from their eyes;

They too his hapless fortune know,

As they his manly grace retain.

O Greece, if reft of these, what firm allies

How dauntless in th' ensanguin'd plain

Wilt thou lament——

No more: for see, the monarch of this land,
Lycus, advances to this house. He's here.

LYCUS, AMPHITRYON, MEGARA, CHORUS.

LYC. If I might ask the father and the wife
 Of Hercules, and sure your lord may ask,
 In what confiding seek you to prolong
 Your life? What hope presents itself, what force
 Expect you, not to die? Have you a thought
 That from the realms of Pluto, where he lies,
 The sire of these will come, you raise your grief,
 Since you must die, so misbecomingly?
 To thee I speak, who many an empty boast
 Hast spread through Greece, that Jove once shar'd thy bed,
 And gave this strange son birth: I speak to thee,
 Who of the bravest man art call'd the wife.
 Yet by thy husband what illustrious deed
 Hath been achiev'd, if he destroy'd and slew
 The marsh-bred Hydra, or Nemæan beast,
 Which in his nets he caught, then vaunting said
 He grasp'd it in his arms, and strangled it?
 On this presume you to contend with me?
 Is it for this the sons of Hercules
 Ought not to die? Who, with no merit, held
 The fame of daring courage, that with beasts
 He fought, in nought besides his prowess prov'd:
 His left hand never knew to raise the shield,
 Never advanc'd he nigh the spear, but held
 The bow, a coward's weapon, and to flight
 Was always prompt; no proof of manhood, none
 Of daring courage is the bow, best shewn
 By him, who on the battle's perilous edge
 Conspicuous, dares to face the rapid spear,
 And shrinks not from the furrow'd wounds it cuts.
 Think not, old man, what now I do takes rise
 From insolence, but caution: well I know
 I slew her father Creon, and possess
 His throne; I therefore have no will to rear
 These boys, and leave them to revenge my deeds.

AMPH. May Jove protect his son, for that to Jove

Belongs : with words his folly to refute
 Shall be my part ; for never will I bear
 To hear thee, Hercules, defamed. And first
 The charge of cowardice, shame on the tongue
 That brought so vile a charge, will I disprove,
 And call the gods to witness. Let me ask
 The thunder, and the flaming car of Jove,
 Which he ascending in the giant sons
 Of earth his winged arrows deep infix'd,
 And shared the glorious triumph of the gods.
 To Pholoe go, basest of kings, and ask
 The four-hoof'd monsters of the centaur-race,
 What man they judge the bravest : whom would they
 Name, but my son ? Yet is his fame, thou say'st,
 Held by no merit. Ask th' Eubœan Dirphe,
 That nurtur'd thee : it would not sound thy praise ;
 For never will thy country for aught brave,
 Where'er achiev'd, bear witness to thy fame.
 But wisdom's prime invention dost thou blame,
 The arrow-bearing quiver : hear me now,
 And become wise : the man array'd in arms
 Is to his arms a slave, and station'd nigh
 Weak-hearted dastards, through their cowardice
 He perishes ; or should he break his spear,
 What hath he to protect him from the carnage,
 His valour thus disarm'd ? But he, that grasps
 The skilful-aiming bow, hath in his hand
 One thing which much avails him, whence he sends
 A thousand arrows 'gainst the breast of others,
 Himself from death defending ; and, his stand
 Held distant, pours his vengeance on his foes,
 Who fall by unseen wounds, himself secure,
 Nor to their arms exposed : for in the fight
 This is the work of wisdom, to annoy
 The enemies, secure from their attack.

205. Lycus was an Eubœan : Dirphe, or Dirphys, was a mountain of Eubœa not far from OEBALIA, which Hercules laid waste, therefore a witness of his valour, *Barnes*.

This to refute thy vain plea have I said.
But wherefore wou'dst thou kill these boys ? To thee
What have they done ? Yet must I hold thee wise
In this one point, that, coward as thou art,
Thou view'st the offspring of the brave with dread.
Yet this on us is hard, that we must die
Through thy base cowardice, when on thy head
Our vengeance, for thy betters we, should fall,
Were Jove with righteous thought attentive to us.
If thou wilt hold the sceptre of this land,
Permit us exiled hence to fly : by force
Nothing shalt thou obtain, or on thyself
Draw vengeance, when the god shall change the gale
In which thy sails now wanton. Thankless Thebes,
For I will turn to thee, on thee will pour
My just reproaches, dost thou thus defend
The hero and his sons ? Yet he advanc'd
Alone 'gainst all the Minyæ in arms,
And gave thine eye to view the golden light
Of liberty. Nor, Greece, dost thou deserve
My praise, nor ever will I lock my lips
In silence at thy baseness to my son :
Thee it behov'd in aid of these poor boys
With fire, with spears, with arms to rush along,
Their father's toils requiting, for he clear'd
Thy seas, thy land, from every ruffian force
Infesting them : but nor the state of Thebes,
Nor Greece, my sons, hath spirit to protect you.
On me you cast your eyes, a friend indeed,
But weak, and nothing but a sounding tongue :
Long hath my strength forsaken me, my limbs
Tremble with age, my languid nerves unbraced.
O that I now were young, or that these arms
Retain'd their vigour, I would grasp the spear,
And stain those yellow-waving locks with blood ;
Or force the baffled coward from my lance
To fly beyond th' Atlantic's furthest bounds.

CHOR. Are not the good, though to opprobrious words

Slow, oft provok'd by wrongs to give them vent?

LYC. Speak thou against me what proud words thou wilt,
There fortified; yet for those words my deeds
Shall work thee woe.—Go, bid the woodmen haste,
Some to the valleys of Parnassus, some
To Helicon, there hew the trunks of oak,
And bear them to the city; pile them you
Each way this altar round, set them on fire,
And burn those wretches there; that they may know
Their Creon dead no longer in these realms
Bears rule, but I am now the lord of Thebes.
And you, old men, who dare oppose your wills
To mine, the sons of Hercules alone
Lament not, but the ruin that shall fall
On your own house; you will remember then
That you are slaves to my despotic pow'r.

CHOR. You, offspring of the earth, whom Mars of old
Sow'd when the dragon's furious jaws he bar'd,
Will not each raise the staff which his right hand
Supports, and dash it 'gainst his bleeding head,
Who, not a Theban, o'er the Theban youth
Most basely lords it, alien though he be?
Yet never shalt thou hold thy tyrant sway
With joy o'er me, nor, what my hand with toil
Hath earn'd, possess: with mischief on thy head
Hence to the country whence thou cam'st, there spread
Thy insults; whilst I live, ne'er shalt thou kill
The sons of Hercules; for not so far
Lies he conceal'd beneath the earth, his sons
Forsaking: of these regions thou art lord,
Which groan beneath thy ravages, whilst he,
Who succour'd them, receives no worthy meed.
Much I avail my friends by all the zeal
I shew the dead, when friends are wanted most.
O my right hand, how dost thou long to grasp
The spear! but now the vengeful hour is lost
In weak old age; else would I check thy pride,
Who call'st me slave: with glory might we then

Inhabit this our Thebes, now thy delight.

Ill fares it with that unwise state, which shakes

With base sedition and ill counsels rent;

Else it had ne'er receiv'd thee as its lord.

MEG. Ye reverend men, I thank you; for our friends

A just resentment shews an honest zeal;

Yet in our cause let not your anger rise

Against your lords, to draw their vengeance on you.

And thou, Amphitryon, hear what now my soul

Suggests, if worth attention aught I speak.

I love my children; how can I but love them,

Whom I brought forth, and cherish'd with fond care?

Nay more, I think it terrible to die:

Yet him, that strives against necessity,

I deem but ill advis'd. Since we must die,

Unseemly were it that we die consum'd

With fire, so made a mockery to our foes;

Death were to me a lighter ill; and much,

Much to the honour of our house we owe.

The glory of the puissant spear is thine;

Be not that glory tarnish'd at thy death

Through fear: the glory of my husband needs

Nought to attest it; neither would he wish

To save his sons, where infamy must taint

Their honest fame; ill brooks the generous mind

Dishonour on his children; nor shall I

Refuse to emulate my noble lord.

See now how lightly I esteem thy hope:

Hast thou a thought that from the realms below

Thy son will come? Who ever from those realms

Return'd? Or deem'st thou that to soothing words

He will relent? An untaught, brutal foe

To fly were much dishonour; to the wise,

Whose minds are train'd to virtue, we submit,

For there a modest gentleness we find.

My mind suggests, might we prevail to save

My sons by exile, what a wretched state

Is safety with distressful poverty;

Since from the face of such a guest each friend
 Will turn, nor longer than a single day
 Behold him with a pleasant eye. Then dare
 To die with us, since thou must die, how'er
 Thou bear thy death: thy nobleness of soul,
 Old man, we challenge. He, who strives against
 Heav'n-sent calamities, strives but to shew
 His folly; for the necessary ill
 Will come, its fatal course no god can check.

CHOR. If whilst my arm retain'd its vig'rous force
 This insult had been offer'd, I with ease
 Should have repell'd it: I am nothing now.
 Behoves thee then, Amphytryon, to look to it,
 How best to guard thee from th' impending ill.

AMPH. Nothing of abject fear, nor fond desire
 Of life withholds me, that I yield to death
 Reluctant; but a warm wish for my son
 To save his sons, an unavailing wish!
 See, to thy sword this neck is stretch'd; plunge deep
 Thy falchion, kill me, hurl me from the rock:
 Yet for one grace I am thy suppliant, king,
 Kill me, kill her the wretched mother, e'er
 Thou slay the children: let me not behold
 Th' unhallow'd sight, nor, while their warm blood flows,
 Hear them with cries call on their mother, call
 On me their father's father: for the rest,
 If such thy ruthless purpose, act thy will:
 We have no pow'r to rescue us from death.

MEG. I am thy suppliant too; to grace add grace,
 And merit thanks of both: permit me, king,
 Opening the doors, which now are shut against us,
 T' array my children in the dress of death:
 A scanty portion from their father's house.

L.YC. Well, be it so. Of my attendants some
 Open the house: go in, array yourselves;
 I envy not your robes; when you are vested
 With such attire as suits thee, I will come
 And send you to the darksome realms below.

- MEG. Come then, my sons, let your unhappy steps
 Attend your mother to your father's house:
 Others indeed there lord it, and have seiz'd
 His wealth, the name as yet remains with us.
- AMPH. In vain, O Jove, that thou hast shared my bed,
 It is in vain that I am call'd with thee
 The father of this son; thou art a friend
 Less than thou seemest: mortal as I am
 In virtue I exceed thee, though a god
 Of mighty pow'r; for I have not betray'd
 The sons of Hercules: well didst thou know
 To come by stealth unto my couch, t' invade
 A bed not thine, no leave obtain'd; to save
 Thy friends thou dost not know: thou art a god
 In wisdom or in justice little vers'd.

CHORUS.

- STRO. 1. Their meed of fame when virtue's works require,
 Sublimar measures Phœbus brings,
 Smites with a bolder hand his golden lyre,
 And gives to glory all its sounding strings.
 'Tis mine to bid the numbers flow,
 The hero's glorious deeds to crown,
 Who to the dreary realms below
 Dared with bold step the dang'rous path to tread,
 If him Amphitryon's son I name,
 Or Jove his offspring deigns to own;
 She generous virtues claim this meed of fame,
 This honour to th' illustrious dead,
 The sacred forest saw his first of toils
 Peace to its frighted glades restore,
 And grateful echoed with applause,
 When o'er his manly limbs the victor wore
 The tawny lion's shaggy spoils,
 Terrific with its yawning jaws.
- ANTIS. 1. With many a shaft wing'd from his fatal bow
 The savage Centaurs' mountain band
 He quell'd, and laid the bleeding monsters low,

In Pholoe gored by his victorious hand:
 Peneüs, witness to his might,
 In triumph roll'd his beauteous tide;
 Witness was each uncultur'd height;
 The woods of Pelion nodding to the gale,
 And neighb'ring Omole's deep caves;
 Descending down whose rugged side
 Each Centaur in his hand a pine-tree waves,
 And thund'ring o'er Thessalia's vale
 With fierce incursions shook the country round.
 The spotted hind, that rear'd with pride
 The golden honours of its head,
 And wasted Cene's sylvan coverts wide,
 Untired he chas'd, he seiz'd, he bound,
 A trophy to the huntress maid.

STRO. 2. He yoked the fiery coursers to the car,
 Ent'ring the Thracian tyrant's walls,
 And taught their mouths the iron curb to bear:
 Unrein'd, and pawing in their gore dew'd stalls
 Greedy of human flesh they stood,
 Furious the mangled bodies tore,
 And drank with savage joy their blood:
 These steeds, the silver-flowing Hebrus past,
 He drove its further bank beside,
 Drove them along Thessalia's shore,
 Where to the ocean wave with headlong haste
 Anaurus rolls his foaming pride,
 Then to Mycenæ's monarch bore the prize.
 The cruel Cynus felt his might,
 Who slew with ruthless hand each guest,
 Proud dweller of Amphanæ's rugged height;
 Pierc'd by his shafts in blood he lies,
 And gives th' avenged stranger rest.

ANTIS. 2. To the rich gardens nigh th' Hesperian main
 Burnish'd with summer's brightest glow,
 Where still the tuneful sisters pour the strain
 In all the melting melody of woe,
 He came; avow'd his purpose bold

To pluck th' ambrosial fruit, that grew
 Irradiate on the boughs of gold;
 In vain the watchful dragon wreath'd around
 His spires voluminous and vast,
 The fiery-scaled guard he slew.
 To the wide ocean's foaming gulfs he past,
 And on the earth's last western bound
 Memorials of his toils his pillars rears.
 Beneath the centre of the skies,
 Whose weight the lab'ring Atlas loads,
 Friendly relief his matchless strength supplies,
 And on his patient shoulders bears
 The starry mansions of the gods.

STRO. 3. O'er the black Euxine's hoarse-resounding wave
 He sought the Amazonian host,
 Who on their fiery steeds the battle brave,
 In martial ranks arrang'd along the coast,
 Where frequent streams their silver tide
 To swell the dull Mæotis roll:
 Who of his friends, their country's pride,
 Did not in arms, t' attend their chief, arise?
 The warlike Virgin's fatal zone,
 And the rich texture of her stole,
 Where radiant gold on glowing purple shone,
 He sought, and Greece receiv'd the prize,
 Th' illustrious spoils of the barbaric maid
 With triumph in Mycenæ held.
 The horrid Hydra's hundred heads,
 Hell-hound of Lerna, arm'd with flames he quell'd.
 His shafts the triple tyrant laid
 Bleeding on Erythea's meads.

ANTIS. 3. To other toils he rous'd his matchless might,
 And glorious conquest crown'd his brow;
 But now, his last of toils, from heav'n's fair light
 Vent'rous he sail'd to Pluto's realms below:
 Unhappy, from that mournful shore
 Never, ah! never to return;
 He sees the light of life no more.

Far from his house each faithless friend is fled :
 The Stygian boat his sons awaits,
 Who now their absent father mourn ;
 Them o'er the hateful stream th' unrighteous fates
 Th' irremeable way shall lead,
 And all their present aid thy feeble age.
 Could I with youthful vigour stand,
 And firmly grasp the thund'ring spear,
 Girt with my brave compeers this daring hand
 Should guard them from the tyrant's rage:
 But youth and strength are wither'd here.

CHOR. But in the sable robes of death array'd,
 Behold, they come, the sons of Hercules,
 Once the illustrious, and his much-loved wife,
 Leading her children coupled at her side
 By the same chain of fate, and the old sire
 Of Hercules ; a sight of woe, that draws
 Tears from the fountains of these aged eyes.

MEGARA AND HER SONS, AMPHITRYON,
 CHORUS.

MEG. Come now : what priest, what butcher of th' afflicted,
 What bloody murd'rer of my wretched life
 To Pluto's courts these ready victims leads ?
 Alas, my sons, ill-match'd beneath the yoke,
 The old, the young, the mothers, are we led
 To death : O miserable fate, that waits
 Me and my sons, whom never shall my eyes
 Again behold ! Ah me, I brought you forth,
 I nurtur'd you, to be insulted, scorn'd
 And murder'd by your foes. Much have my hopes
 Of glory fail'd me, which your father's words
 Once cherish'd ; now, alas, he is no more.
 Argos to * thee his thought assign'd, the seat
 Of proud Eurystheus, the imperial pow'r
 Of fair and rich Pelasgia, o'er thy head .

* Therimachus.

Throwing the lion's shaggy spoils, in war
 His covering*. Thee of car-delighted Thebes
 King he appointed, with thy mother's realms
 Enrich'd; to this the hope of glory led
 His noble thought; and in thy hand he placed
 His strong protecting club, the faithless gift
 Of Dædalus. On † thee Æchalia's tow'rs,
 By his far-wounding bow of old subdued,
 He promis'd to bestow; thus his three sons
 Fix'd in three empires. For your brides I chose
 The most illustrious, and alliances
 At Athens form'd, at Sparta, and at Thebes,
 That anchor'd thus your honourable lives
 Might bid defiance to each rising storm.
 These hopes are vanish'd: fortune, in her course
 Inconstant, now presents the Destinies
 Instead of brides; to me, ah wretched me!
 Tears for the bath; your grandsire here prepares
 The nuptial feast, the father of the bride
 Accounting Pluto: such th' alliance now.
 Wretch that I am, which shall I first, which last
 Clasp to my bosom? which with fondness kiss,
 And which embrace? Or, like the dark-wing'd bee,
 Collect the griefs of each, and bring them all
 Into one store, and there condense the tear?
 O thou most loved, if in the shades below
 The dead can hear the call, to thee I speak,
 O Hercules! Thy father dies, thy sons,
 And I too perish, once by mortals call'd
 Happy through thee: haste, aid us, let thy shade
 Appear to me: thus coming thou wilt save us,
 For they are dastards who would slay thy sons.

AMPH. Whatever to th' infernal pow'rs is due,
 Do thou perform. To thee, O Jove, my hands
 Stretching to heav'n, I call; if thou wilt aid,
 These children, aid them now; thy succour soon

* Creontidas.

† Deicoon.

Will nought avail them; oft have I invok'd thee,
 But vain my labour: of necessity
 It seems then we must die. Ye good old men,
 Brief are th' affairs of life; pass then its course
 In sweet tranquillity, nor grieve yourselves
 From morn to night: time knows not to preserve
 Hope, but attentive to its own concerns
 Wings its swift flight. View me, conspicuous once
 'Mongst men, and known to fame; but in one day
 Hath fortune swept me off, like a light wing
 That flits along the sky. Nor mighty wealth,
 Nor glory hath to mortals aught of firm
 Or permanent: farewell, for now your eyes
 Take their last view of this your aged friend.

MEG. Ha! do I see my dearest lord? Or what,
 What should I say it is?

AMPH. I know not, daughter,
 Astonishment hath check'd my pow'r of speech.

MEG. Yes, it is he, who we had heard was held
 Beneath the earth; unless we see some vision
 In the clear light of day: what do I say?
 What visions my distracted senses mock?
 This is none other than thy son, old man.
 Come, children, hang upon your father's robes;
 Go to him, quickly go; nay, linger not;
 Not Jove himself could give more present aid.

HERCULES, MEGARA, SONS, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

HERC. Hail, thou fair house! My pillar'd portal, hail!
 With pleasure, reascending to the light,
 You I revisit safe.—What may this mean?
 Before the house I see my sons, their heads
 Wrapt in the dress of death; and 'midst a crowd
 Of men, my wife; my father too in tears
 At some misfortune: near them will I stand,
 And ask the cause. Tell me, thou noble dame,
 What new affliction hath befallen my house?

MEG. O thou most dear of men ! Thy coming beams
Light on thy father : thou art come, art safe,
In happy hour returning to thy friends.

HERC. 'Midst what dismay, my father, am I come?

MEG. We perish. Pardon me, thou good old man,
If first I snatch the words that should be thine ;
The miseries, that afflict our softer sex,
Soonest wake pity ; and my children sink
In death ; on me too the destruction falls.

HERC. To what, O Phœbus, is this poem tuned ?

MEG. Dead are my brothers, and my aged father.

HERC. How was this done ? by whom ? what hostile spear ?

MEG. By Lycus, potent monarch of this land.

HERC. In arms oppos'd, or call'd by faction's rage ?

MEG. By faction lords he o'er the tow'rs of Thebes.

HERC. What terror reach'd my father's age, and thee ?

MEG. Thy father, me, thy sons too he would kill.

HERC. Fear'd he the orphan weakness of my sons ?

MEG. Lest some time Creon's death they should avenge.

HERC. But why this dress, which suits th' infernal pow'rs ?

MEG. We wear it as the meet array of death.

HERC. Should you by force have died ? Unhappy me !

MEG. Of friends deserted : thee we deem'd as dead.

HERC. Whence were your minds o'erwhelm'd with this despair ?

MEG. The heralds of Eurystheus brought these tidings.

HERC. Why left you then my house and household gods ?

MEG. Thy father from his couch was rent by force.

HERC. Did not Shame check such rude affront to age ?

MEG. Far from that goddess Shame hath her abode.

HERC. Absent were we thus destitute of friends ?

MEG. Who is a friend to the unfortunate ?

HERC. Are thus my battles with the Minyæ slighted ?

MEG. Misfortune, I repeat it, hath no friend.

HERC. Will you not cast these coverings from your heads,
'This dress of death, and look upon the light,
Your eyes rejoicing with that sweet exchange
From the dark gloom below ? I, for this work
Requires my hands, will first assail the house

Of this new tyrant, rend it to the ground,
 Hew from his shoulders his unhallow'd head,
 And hurl it to the hungry dogs a prey.
 What Thebans then I find, that ill requite
 My liberal service, this victorious club
 Shall punish; those that fly, my winged shafts
 Shall reach, till all Ismenus with the dead
 Be chok'd, and Dirce rolls her silver tide
 With blood discolour'd. Whom should I protect
 More than my wife, my father, and my sons?
 Farewell my toils: in vain have I achiev'd them
 For others more than these; yet it behoves me
 To die in their defence, since for their father
 They were to die. What, shall the tongues of men
 Repeat my name with glory, that I quell'd
 The Hydra, and subdued the lion's rage,
 Sent by Eurystheus? And my sons from death
 Shall I not fence? Ah, let me then be call'd
 The glorious-conqu'ring Hercules no more.
 Well it becomes the sire to guard his sons,
 His aged father, and connubial bed.

AMPH. 'Tis thine, my son, with friendly zeal to aid
 Thy friends, and to thy foes to be a foe:
 But check th' impetuous ardour of thy soul.

HERC. Doth not the cause demand this ardent zeal?

AMPH. The king hath many friends, poor, but extoll'd
 As rich, and so appearing: these have rais'd
 Seditious tumults, and destroy'd the state;
 Plunder their aim; all their domestic wealth
 Wasted in foul intemperance and sloth.
 Thy entrance hath been seen: be cautious then,
 Lest by this band thou perish unawares.

HERC. I reckon it not, though the whole city saw me.
 But of some ill impending o'er my house
 By omens warn'd of inauspicious wing,
 My entrance was with studied secresy.

AMPH. Go then, with reverence meet address the gods,
 The guardians of thy hearth, and give thine eye

To view thine house: the tyrant soon will come
 With fell intent to slay thy wife, thy sons,
 And murder me: abiding there, th' event
 E'en to thy warmest hopes shalt thou direct,
 With safety gain'd; but let no tumult rouse
 The city, till this deed be well achiev'd.

HERC. So will I act, for thou hast counsell'd well.
 After this tedious absence I once more
 This house will enter, from the sunless courts
 Of Pluto's queen return'd; and first salute
 With reverent awe the gods beneath my roof.

AMPH. Didst thou indeed to Pluto's house descend?

HERC. And dragg'd the triple-headed dog to light.

AMPH. By force subdued, or by the goddess giv'n?

HERC. By force: the mystic orgies, blest, I saw.

AMPH. Is then the monster in Eurystheus' house?

HERC. Hermion in the grove of Chthonia holds him.

AMPH. Knows not Eurystheus thy return to light?

HERC. He knows it not: my zeal first led me hither.

AMPH. What in those dreary regions caus'd thy stay?

HERC. To rescue Theseus stay'd I there so long.

AMPH. Where is he? To his native realms return'd?

HERC. To Athens is he gone, with joy escaped
 Those gloomy shades. But come, my sons, attend
 Your father to his house: you enter now
 With fairer expectations than you left it:
 Take courage then, no longer pour this stream
 Of tears: and thou, my wife, resume thy spirit,
 Tremble no more, nor hang upon my robes;
 I have no wings, nor will I fly my friends.
 They hold me yet, yet hang upon my robes:
 Well, on the edge of danger since you stood,
 Be you my charge; my broader sails shall draw
 Your little barks attendant on their course;
 Such office to my children I disdain not.
 The common feelings of mankind to this
 Incite us all; the most exalted love
 Their offspring, and the meanest: wealth perchance

May make distinctions, some abound, some want,
But to their children all have equal love.

CHORUS.

- STRO. 1. Gay was my Youth, and light as air,
 But Age a burden on my head
Heavier than all the rocks of *Ætna* lies,
 Malignant o'er my darkling eyes
 A gloomy light to spread.
Not the proud wealth of *Asia's* throne to share,
Not that my house with gold might shine,
 Would I my Youth resign :
In wealth Youth holds the brightest place,
Youth gives to poverty a grace.
This cumbrous, sad, funereal Age I hate :
Hence to the whelming ocean haste,
Or fly before the howling blast ;
No more thy hideous form be shewn,
Come not to man in hut or town,
 To blast his cheerful state !
- ANTIS. 1. Would the wise gods with righteous eyes
 Th' affairs of mortal man survey,
Twice would they bid the rosy-bosom'd hours
Awake to life Youth's purple flow'rs,
 And twice its bloom display,
Their grace to mark the virtuous and the wise :
These twice should see the golden light,
 With Youth's fresh glories bright.
Not so the base : their youthful hour,
Once fled, should be recall'd no more :
Thus from the vile the virtuous would be known,
As stars through opening clouds appear,
And light the sailors where to steer.
But no distinctive mark is giv'n ;
All down one rolling age are driv'n,
 Studios of wealth alone.
- STRO. 2. To the Muses' seat divine
 Let me still the Graces lead,

Sweetest union ! round my head
 Still their blooming garlands twine.
 With the Muses let me live,
 Then to Memory will I give
 The high recording strain.
 Then, though age hath damp'd my flame,
 Still the hero will I praise
 Still his glorious conquests raise ;
 Bacchus too the song shall claim :
 The sev'n-toned shell's harmonious treasures,
 And the Libyan reed's soft measures
 Shall flow in mingled vein,
 And charm the Muse, who bids my feet advance,
 Nor cease through age to join the sprightly dance.

ANTIS. 2. Pleas'd Latona's race to praise,
 Round the temple's splendid gate
 Bands of Delian virgins wait,
 And the tuneful Pæans raise,
 As in many a beauteous round
 Light they tread the hallow'd ground,
 Thus at thy gate I stand,
 Like the swan, for reverend time
 Hath these few hairs silver'd o'er,
 I the tuneful Pæan pour :
 Many an argument sublime
 Jove's victorious son supplies,
 Which command the song to rise,
 And hymn the hero's hand,
 Whose shafts the terror-spreading savage gor'd,
 And safety to th' affrighted world restor'd.

LYCUS, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

LYC. At length Amphitryon from the house returns.
 Tedious the time you spend t' array yourselves
 In the dark robes and ornaments of death.
 But haste, call forth the children and the wife
 Of Hercules; your promise now I claim,
 That unreluctant you submit to die.

AMPH. In my afflictions, king, with rig'rous speed
 Dost thou pursue me, and in death to wrong
 Add insult? 'midst thy pow'r a mod'rate haste
 Might well become thee: of necessity,
 Since thou imposest death, we must submit,
 And all thy dreadful pleasure must be done.

LYC. Where is Megara, where Alcmena's race?

AMPH. I think, if from the doors I guess aright—

LYC. What is the subject of that thought, that guess?

AMPH. Suppliant before her hallow'd gods she sits.

LYC. Suppliant she sits in vain to save her life.

AMPH. And calls in vain her husband now no more.

LYC. He is not here: and never will he come.

AMPH. Never, unless some god restore him to us.

LYC. Go to her then, and lead her from the house.

AMPH. Then should I be accomplice of her death.

LYC. Since such thy thought, I, who have no vain fears,
 Will bring them forth, the mother and the sons.
 You, my attendants, follow; that reliev'd
 From all our toils with pleasure we may rest.

AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

AMPH. Why get thee gone, if thou must go, but call'd
 Perchance to other cares: as thy intent
 Is mischief, mischief light on thee. Old men,
 For good he goes, and rushes on the toils
 Staked round with swords, whose villainous thoughts are
 bent

On murder. I will go, and see him fall
 In blood: some pleasure yields a dying foe,
 When vengeance bursts upon him for his deeds.

CHOR. This is a just vicissitude of ills:

This king, so pow'rful lately, from his height
 Is sunk to Pluto's realms: this is thy deed,
 O vengeance, and the righteous doom of heav'n.

AMPH. At length thou art arrived where death repays
 Thy wrongs to merit greater far than thine.

CHOR. Joy opes the fount of tears: these things are come,

Which in his pride the monarch of this land
To suffer had no thought. But let us see,
Old man, if vengeance falls as I would have it.

LYC. Ah me, ah me!

[*within.*]

CHOR. The music of his groans
Comes from the house delightful to mine ear.
Death is not distant far: he cries, he cries,
The proud king groans, the prelude to his fate.

LYC. O land of Thebes, I perish by deceit.

CHOR. So thou mad'st others perish: bear thou then
This retribution, punish'd for thy deeds.
What mortal man shall by injustice dare
To violate the gods, and madly arm
His profane tongue against the blest immortals
As of no pow'r? This impious man is fallen:
Silence is in the house; exult we then
In festive dance; success hath graced our friends.

STRO. 1. With joy, with joy now, sacred Thebes, resound,
Feast and dance shall revel round:
Fortune fav'ring now appears,
Dries the bitter fount of tears,
And bids th' exulting song arise,
For low in dust the mighty tyrant lies.
Beyond our hopes from those dark shores,
Where Acheron's sad torrent roars,
Comes our chief, and holds again
The glories of his reign.

ANTIS. 1. The gods, the gods hear when the pious calls;
And the guilty tyrant falls.
Gold and fortune's wanton ray
Blinded mortals leads away,
Let wisdom's voice be heard no more,
And draws the pageant pomp of lawless pow'r.
Yet shall the gods at length look down,
To justice give her radiant crown,
Kind in virtue's cause declare,
And crush wealth's dazzling car.

STRO. 2. With flow'ry garlands breathing sweets

Be thy fresh stream, Ismenus, crown'd :
 And, Thebes, through all thy stately streets
 With festive dance and song resound !
 Haste, lovely Dirce, from thy silver spring :
 Ye daughters of Asopus, leave
 Your father's rock-descending wave ;
 To Hercules, harmonious virgins bring
 Th' enraptur'd strain, that gives to fame
 The conquering hero's glorious name.
 Ye woods, that wave on Pytho's rocky brow,
 Ye streams of Helicon, that flow
 The Muse's hallow'd haunts along,
 Give to my town the joy-resounding song,
 My tow'rs, from whose astonish'd fields
 Upstart'd fierce the dragon race,
 Shook their strong spears, and clash'd their brazen shields,
 Whose sons, the pride of Thebes, this sacred city grace.

ANTIS. 2. Hail we that mystic couch aright,
 Which, conscious of a double love,
 This noble offspring gave to light,
 Sprung from the mortal and from Jove.
 Smit with the nymph of Perseus' high-traced line
 He came ; and faith now doubts no more
 The wond'rous truth reveal'd of yore.
 Thine was the bed, O Jove, the hero thine ;
 For time, with fame's own radiance bright,
 Gives all his glorious deeds to light :
 From the dark courts, where Pluto holds his reign,
 He views the sun's fair beams again ;
 And to our long-lost hope restor'd
 No more we dread our former ruthless lord :
 For now the fatal toils are spread,
 Inclosed the impious tyrant lies :
 The sword of vengeance thunders on his head,
 If sacred justice yet be grateful to the skies.

IRIS, LYSSA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Ah me, ah me ! Are we roll'd back again

To the same gulf of fear? Behold that form,
 That hideous form, which hovers o'er the house.
 Fly, fly, my friends; to your slow steps add speed;
 Hence let us haste. O Phœbus, potent king,
 Avert whate'er of ill this omen bodes!

IRIS. Despond not, reverend men, beholding her,
 Lyssa, the progeny of Night, and me,
 Iris, who execute the gods' commands.
 No evil to the town we bring, but war
 Against one man, whom fame reports the son
 Of Jove and your Alcmena; whilst his toils
 Were unachiev'd, the Fates protected him;
 Nor would Jove suffer me, or Juno's hate
 To work him ill: Eurystheus' mandates now
 Accomplish'd, Juno wills he bathe his hands
 Afresh in blood, his children's blood; and I
 Assent. Haste then, and unrelenting seize
 His heart, unwedded daughter of black Night:
 To madness, to distraction, till he raves,
 And bounds, and slays his sons, drive, whirl his sense;
 And let him float in blood; till o'er the waves
 Of Acheron he wafts that beauteous band
 Of sons, which like a garland wreath around him,
 Slain by his hand: so let him know the rage
 Of Juno, and learn mine. The gods indeed
 Would be esteem'd at nought, and mortal man
 Raise his proud head, should vengeance not o'ertake him.

LYSS. Illustrious is my lineage, sprung from Night
 My mother, and the blood of Ouranus.
 And these my honours, never 'mongst my friends
 To come a willing foe: I have no joy
 To visit these; but rather e'er I see thee
 Rush headlong on this wrong, admonish thee,
 And Juno, if my words may aught avail.
 This man whose house I enter sent by thee,
 Is not unknown to fame, or on the earth,
 Or 'mongst the gods: the savage wilds untrod
 By human step, the monster-teeming sea,

Made safe and gentle, he alone restored
 The honours of the gods, by impious men
 Trod under foot profanely: nor can I
 Advise thee to design these dreadful ills.

IRIS. No more of thy advice: the great designs
 Of Juno to superior goodness tend,
 And not to ill: nor hath the wife of Jove
 Sent thee to give thy grave monitions here.

LYSS. I call yon sun to witness, that I do
 What I wish not to do: but if perforce
 The will of Juno I must execute,
 And thine, with speed; if I must follow thee
 As the fleet hound the hunter, on I go:
 Not the vex'd sea that roars beneath its waves,
 The rocking earthquake, or the thunder's rage
 Inflicting pangs, are like the violence
 Which drives my rapid course against the breast
 Of Hercules: to rend these solid walls,
 To desolate his house, to slay his sons
 I go: and he that kills them shall not know
 They are his sons that fall beneath his hands,
 Till he hath respite from my rage. And see,
 Now at the doors he shakes his locks, and rolls
 In silence his distorted gorgon eyes,
 From some fierce effort breathless, like a bull
 Dreadful in the assault he roars, and calls
 The Stygian Furies: I will rouse thee soon
 To fiercer boundings, struck with inbreath'd horror.
 But to Olympus, radiant Iris, speed
 Thy wings; I to this house will haste unseen.

CHOR. Lament, O Thebes; thy fairest flow'r
 Cut down shall breathe its sweets no more:
 Unhappy Greece, through ev'ry state
 Mourn the lost patron of mankind;
 The son of Jove sinks in the storm of fate,
 And murd'rous frenzy whirls his tortur'd mind.
 Spreading dismay and wild affright
 The gorgon progeny of Night

With mournful rage ascends her car,
 And fraught with mischief fiercely flies,
 With hissing serpents wreathes her horrid hair,
 And glares pernicious lightning from her eyes.
 Soon from her pow'r shall joy recede,
 Soon by the sire the sons shall bleed:
 O Jove, I feel th' oppressive woe;
 Thy race in sudden ruin falls;
 This house devouring frenzy will o'erthrow,
 And vengeance triumph o'er its shatter'd walls.
 Now begins the dreadful dance;
 But no timbrel's cheerful sound,
 But no thyrsus ivy-crown'd
 To Bacchus bids the festive choir advance;
 Nor the rich grape's purple flood
 Bathes the soul in ecstasy;
 The libation's made in blood.
 Fly, unhappy children, fly;
 Hostile, hostile is the strain,
 Opening in this chase of death;
 For this frenetic fiend in vain
 Will not rave this roof beneath.

Notes of woe

Sadly flow,

Mourn the father's sinking years,

Mourn the mother's fruitless cares:

Behold, behold,

The wild storm on the house is roll'd,

Rends the roof, and shakes the walls;

Ah, see, it falls, it falls!

* * * What, son of Jove, thy fell intent?

Why through this mansion hath thine hand,

Like Pallas thund'ring on the giant-band,

This Tartarean ruin sent?

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESS. O Thebans white with age!

CHOR.

Wherefore to us

This cry?

MESS. Within the house are deeds that shock
Remembrance: I shall bring no other proof,
The boys are dead.

CHOR. Ah, let me weep their fate!

MESS. Let your tears flow, there is much cause for tears;
For horrible the deed, the father's hands
Most horrible, beyond the pow'r of words.

CHOR. How was this mournful ruin of the sons,
This ruin from the father? From the gods
How rush'd these furious mischiefs on the house?
How did destruction end her bloody work?

MESS. Before the altar of high Jove the rites
Were now prepar'd to purify the house
Whence Hercules had cast the tyrant's corse.
His sons had form'd a beauteous circle round,
His father, and Megara: now the vase,
That held the knife, the salted cake, the crowns,
Was borne around the altar; from our lips
Burst no unhallow'd voice: in his right hand
Ready to bear the brand Alcmena's son,
Soon as he plung'd it in the laver, stood
Silent: as long he paus'd, his children's eyes
Were fix'd upon him, now no more the same,
Whilst wildly his distorted eye-balls glared,
Their nerves all streak'd with blood, and down his beard
Dropp'd foam: then with an horrid smile he cried,
Why, father, should my hand perform these rites
E'er I have slain Eurystheus, twice to kindle
This purifying flame, and twice to bear
This toil, which well may be discharg'd at once?

1013. All things being prepared, the *mola salsa*, with the knife or other instrument to kill the victims, and the crowns, were brought in a basket called *κανών*; whence the Athenian virgins, whose office it was to carry this basket at the Panathenæa and some other solemnities, were called *κανηφόροι*. *Potter's Archæol. Gr.* vol. i. p. 226.

1016. This was the ceremony of hallowing the purifying water: the sacrificer took a lighted brand from the altar, and plunged it into the laver: as fire was held to be of a purifying nature, and this was sacred fire, it was thought to communicate its purifying quality to the water.

When hither I shall bring Eurystheus' head,
For these now slain the lustral streams shall cleanse
My hands; now pour them on the ground, and cast
Each hallow'd vase aside. Who brings my bow?
And who my massy weapon? I with speed
Go to Mycenæ: each machine of war
To shake, to rend, to undermine its walls,
Is needful: from their deep base will I heave
The well-compacted ramparts, though by hands
Cyclopean built. Then issuing forth he said
His car was there, though there he had no car;
He said he mounted, and, as if he lash'd
His coursers forward, waved his hand; a sight
Ridiculous, yet dreadful: of his train
Each on the other darts a glance, and asks,
Doth our lord mock us, or hath madness seiz'd him?
Then to and fro he wander'd through the house;
Ent'ring th' apartments of the men, in the midst
He stopp'd, and said it was the town of Nisus,
Then stretch'd along the pavement, as if there,
Order'd the banquet; after some short stay,
On to the hall he pass'd, and that he call'd
The wood-fring'd Isthmus; there his upper robe
Unclasp'd he fought with nothing, and declared
He had obtain'd a glorious victory,
But o'er unreal foes, with dreadful threats
Against Eurystheus, for he thought himself
Now at Mycenæ: but his father here
Touch'd his strong hand, and thus address'd him, What
Afflicts my son? Why is thy sense estrang'd?
Hath not the blood of those, who late were slain,
Impell'd thee to this frenzy? He, who thought
The father of Eurystheus struck with fear
Hung on his hand a suppliant, thrust him off,
And from his golden quiver draws his shafts
Prepared against his sons, weening to slay
Those of Eurystheus; they with wild affright
Ran diverse; one, to hide him in the robes

Of his unhappy mother; to the shade
 One of a pillar; at the altar one
 Lay caw'ring, like a bird: the mother cries,
 What means the father? Wilt thou slay thy sons?
 The hoary sire, th' attendants cry aloud:
 He, as his son around the pillar winds,
 With dreadful step turns opposite to meet him,
 And strikes him to the heart; backwards he fell,
 And with his blood the marble column dew'd
 Expiring: with a shout he triumph'd thus,
 One of Eurystheus' brood lies here in death
 By me, and for his father's hatred pays
 His forfeit life. Then 'gainst another son
 He stretch'd his bow; beneath the altar's base
 This caw'ring lay, and hoped to lie conceal'd:
 Th' unhappy boy sprung to his father's knees
 The stroke preventing, threw his arms around
 His neck, and cried, My father, do not kill me,
 My dear, dear father, I am thine, thy child,
 In me thou wilt not kill Eurystheus' son.
 He grimly roll'd his gorgon-glaring eye,
 And, as the boy press'd close and gave the dart
 No space to fly, as one that on the anvil
 Smites the hot iron, on his golden tresses
 He dash'd the fatal shaft, and crush'd the bone.
 Two sons thus slain, he hastes to add the third
 To these a victim; but th' unhappy mother
 Had caught him up, borne him within the house,
 And closed the doors: as though he storm'd the walls
 Rais'd by the Cyclops, he assaulted, rent,
 And burst the shatter'd posts, then with one shaft
 Transfix'd his wife and son; thence rush'd to slay
 His hoary sire: but now an image came,
 Pallas, conspicuous to the sight, high waved
 Her crested helm; against his breast she hurl'd
 A stone, which check'd his murd'rous rage, and laid him

1100. This is from ancient tradition: Pausanias relates it, and says that the Thebans call this stone *Σωφρονιστήρα*, the Restorer of the senses. *Bæotic*. c. xi.

Stretch'd in a torpid slumber: on the ground
He fell against a pillar's shatter'd mass,
Crush'd in the ruin of the house beneath
Its base; with cords his father bound him fast,
And we, now vent'ring to return from flight
Confined him to the pillar, closely chain'd,
That, when his sleep forsakes him, he may do
No further deed of horror; there he lies,
Unhappy, having slain his sons and wife,
Not in a blest repose; nor can my thought
Conceive of mortal race a greater wretch.

CHOR.

When Danaus arm'd each daughter's hand
To stain with blood the bridal bed,
From Argos through the Grecian land
The horror of the deed was spread.

A deed like this no former age
In its recording annals knew.
What though th' unhappy Procne's rage
Of old the royal Itys slew?

Why of her vengeance should I tell,
Or Philomela's mournful strain?
One son beneath their fury fell,
But here three sons the sire has slain.

These are thy deeds, O son of Jove,
While fate and madness ruled the hour;
Which my impassion'd bosom move
The sad and loud lament to pour.

But in what notes shall I complain?
Can human voice express my woe?
Or shall I raise the sullen strain,
That murmurs through the realms below?

Rent from their stately height behold
 In dust the ruin'd portals lie :
 And, see, th' unhappy children roll'd
 In blood the wretched father nigh !

In dreadful sleep his eyelids clos'd,
 Amidst the carnage spread around,
 Stretch'd on the ground he lies repos'd,
 Fast to the marble column bound.

And see, with mournful step and slow
 The sire, to join us, bends along,
 Like the poor bird with notes of woe
 Wailing its lost unfeather'd young.

AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

AMPH. Be silent, aged citizens of Thebes,
 Be silent; will you not permit him, hush'd
 In sleep, to lose the memory of his ills?

CHOR. Thy reverend age with tears I wail, thy sons,
 And the illustrious hero.

AMPH. Further off
 Remove: no noise, no cry that may disturb
 His deep repose, and raise him from his couch.

CHOR. Ah, what a slaughter this !

AMPH. Forbear, forbear;
 Further remove : you rouse him from his rest.
 Will you not mourn in silence, lest he burst
 His bonds, and rising in his rage destroy
 The town, destroy his father, and this house
 In ruin crush'd?

CHOR. That cannot, cannot be.

AMPH. Be silent: how he breathes will I observe.
 Hush; let me listen.

CHOR. Sleeps he?

AMPH. Yes, he sleeps
 A ruinous sleep, who slew his children, slew
 His wife, destroy'd beneath his whizzing shafts.

CHOR. Now wail.

AMPH. I wail the ruin of his sons.

CHOR. And I, ah me! lament thy son, old man.

AMPH. Silence, I pray you, silence: see, he stirs,
He turns himself: I will away, and lie
Conceal'd within the house.

CHOR. Be not afraid,
Night hangs upon the eyelids of thy son.

AMPH. Behold, behold: with all these ills oppress'd
It grieves me not to leave the light of life,
But should he kill his father, on these ills
He would heap ills, and to these furies add
A parent's blood.

CHOR. Then, then thou shou'dst have died,
When for the murder'd brothers of thy wife
Rising in vengeance thy strong hand laid low
The haughty Taphians' wave-surrounded tow'rs.

AMPH. Fly, fly, my aged friends, far from the house,
Fly this distracted man: he rises, soon
Slaughter to slaughter will his frenzy add,
And with wild deeds rave through the streets of Thebes.

HERC. Why with such fury is thy hate, O Jove,
Inflam'd against thy son? Why hast thou brought him
Into a sea of troubles!—Ha! I breathe,
I see, what I should see, the air, the earth,
And these rays of the sun. Tumultuous waves
And tempests whirl my soul: my breath is hot,
Deep, and irregular. Like a moor'd ship,
With cords around my youthful breast and arms,
Why to this shatter'd pillar am I bound?
These sure are seats that neighbour on the dead.
My winged shafts are scatter'd on the ground,
And there too lies my bow; it was their wont
To guard me hanging at my side, by me
They too were guarded. To th' infernal realms
Am I again return'd, and measure back
The gloomy course appointed by Eurystheus?
But nor the rock of Sisypheus I see,

Nor Pluto, nor the sceptre of his queen.
All is astonishment, and where I am
I know not. Ho! is any of my friends
Near, or far off, who will dispel this cloud
That darkens o'er my senses? for I know
With clearness nothing I was wont to know.

AMPH. My aged friends, shall I go near my ills?

CHOR. I will go with thee, nor in ills forsake thee.

HERC. My father, why these tears? Why dost thou hide
Thine eyes? Why keep thee distant from thy son?

AMPH. My son! for though afflicted thou art mine.

HERC. What my affliction, thus to cause thy tears?

AMPH. What, if a god should suffer, he would mourn.

HERC. Thy phrase is great, but speaks not what the cause.

AMPH. If yet thy sense be perfect, thou may'st see it.

HERC. Say what new ill is mark'd upon my life.

AMPH. I would, but that from hell with frenzy fired—

HERC. Distrust and darkness yet are in thy words.

AMPH. I mark thee if thy senses yet be sound.

HERC. Their loss or weakness I remember not.

AMPH. My aged friends, shall I unbind my son?

HERC. And say who bound me; for I brook it ill.

AMPH. This of thy miseries know: forbear the rest.

HERC. Is it enough that I from silence learn?

AMPH. O Jove, from Juno's seat behold'st thou this?

HERC. Have we again from thence aught hostile born?

AMPH. Forbear th' enquiry, and support thine ills.

HERC. What ruin this, what ill hast thou to tell me?

AMPH. Look here, behold the bodies of thy sons.

HERC. Ah me unhappy, what a sight is this!

AMPH. 'Gainst thy weak sons this war hast thou enforced.

HERC. Of what war dost thou speak? Who hath destroy'd them?

AMPH. Thou, and thy bow, and some exciting god.

HERC. What say'st thou? Have I done this dreadful deed?

AMPH. In frenzy: thou wilt know the wretched truth.

HERC. And am I too the murd'rer of my wife?

AMPH. All are the actions of thy hand alone.

HERC. Ah me! a cloud of sorrow hangs around me.

AMPH. And for this cause I mourn thy miseries.

HERC. And in my frenzy shatter'd I my house?

AMPH. One thing I know, in all things thou art wretched.

HERC. Where did this ruin-working frenzy seize me?

AMPH. There, at the altar's purifying flames.

HERC. Wretch that I am, why should I spare my life,
 Stain'd with the slaughter of my dear, dear sons?
 Should I not rather cast me from the height
 Of some steep rock, or plunge into my heart
 My sword, t' avenge my children's blood, or give
 This body to the flames, to purge away
 The infamy that stains my hated life?—
 But to prevent my deadly purposes,
 See, Theseus comes, my kinsman and my friend.
 I shall be seen, and this detested wretch,
 Who shed his children's blood, stand in the sight
 Of those he holds most dear. What shall I do?
 In what dark solitude conceal my ills?
 O had I wings, or could I sink beneath
 The shelt'ring earth! but let me hide my head
 Close muffled in my robes: I am ashamed
 Of these foul deeds: nor with this guilty blood
 Sprinkled, would I pollute the innocent.

THESEUS, AMPHITRYON, HERCULES, CHORUS.

THES. With those that on Asopus' banks in arms
 Their station hold, Athenian youth, I come,
 Bearing this friendly spear to aid thy son,
 Old man: for loud in Athens is the fame
 That, having seiz'd the sceptre of this land,
 Lycus with war assaults you: to repay
 With grateful zeal what to my friend is due,
 Who freed me from the realms below, I come,
 If aught my arm, or this confederate force
 May bring of use.—Alas, whence is this ground
 Thus cover'd with the dead? Are my intents
 Thus frustrate? Am I for these recent ills
 Arriv'd too late? Who slew these boys? Whose wife

Behold I here? These stand not nigh the spear;
But this must be some fresh calamity.

AMPH. O thou, whose seat is on the olive mount!

THES. Why with this mournful voice dost thou address me?

AMPH. We from the gods have suffer'd dreadful ills.

THES. What boys are these, o'er whom thy sorrows flow?

AMPH. My wretched son's: their father he, his hand
Is with their blood distain'd.

THES. To happier words
Be thy voice turn'd.

AMPH. The willing dost thou charge.

THES. O thou hast told me dreadful things.

AMPH. At once
Ruin hath seiz'd us, ruin.

THES. What is this?
What hath he done?

AMPH. By frenzy's potion whirl'd,
Drugg'd with the hundred-headed Hydra's venom.

THES. This is a conflict rais'd by Juno's rage,
But who is he, that sits among the dead?

AMPH. This is my son, much exercis'd in ills:
This is my son, who 'mongst the gods advanc'd
Rais'd high his shield on the Phlegræan plain,
Empurpling with the giants' blood his spear.

THES. What mortal e'er was born to greater woe?

AMPH. No mortal man more exercis'd in toils,
None more expos'd to dangers canst thou know,

THES. But in his robes why doth he hide his head?

AMPH. He blushes to behold thy face, his friend,
Join'd by the ties of consanguinity;
He blushes to behold his slaughter'd sons.

THES. I came to mourn with him: uncover him.

AMPH. Remove, my son, this covering from thine eyes,
Throw it aside, shew to the sun thy face:
Thy dignity against thy tears contends.
Low at thy knees I fall, and grasp thy hand
A suppliant, whilst down mine aged cheek
Flow tears. My son, restrain the lion's rage,

Which to unhallow'd deathful deeds impell'd,
To ills desirous to add ills, my son.

THES. Let him prevail: to thee, whose wretched seat
Is on the ground, I speak: shew to thy friends
Thy face: no darkness hath a cloud so black
Which can conceal the misery of thy state.
Why dost thou wave thine hand, to signify
This slaughter as thy words on me would bring
Pollution? Never will my soul repine
To be unhappy with thee, for through thee
I once was happy. Memory will recal
The time, when from the gloomy dead thy hand
Brought me to heav'n's sweet light. Abhorr'd be they,
Who let th' impression of a friend's kind deeds
Fade from their heart; and they, who wish to share
His prosp'rous gale, but in the adverse storm
Forsake his bark. Arise, unveil thy head,
And look upon us. What the gods inflict,
The noble spirit unreluctant bears.

HERC. Hast thou beheld this carnage of my sons?

THES. I heard, I saw the ills thou shewest me.

HERC. Why hast thou then unveil'd me to the sun?

THES. Why not? Can mortal man pollute the gods?

HERC. Fly thou, unhappy, my polluting guilt.

THES. Friends from their friends no stain of guilt contract.

HERC. This hath my thanks: indeed I wrought thee good.

THES. And I, for that good deed, now pity thee.

HERC. I want thy pity: I have slain my sons.

THES. Thee, for thy grace in others' ills, I mourn.

HERC. Whom hast thou known involv'd in ills like these?

THES. Thy yast misfortunes reach from earth to heav'n.

HERC. I therefore am prepared, and fix'd to die.

THES. And weenest thou the gods regard thy threats?

HERC. The gods regard not me, nor I the gods.

THES. Forbear; lest thy proud words provoke worse ills.

HERC. I now am full, and can contain no more.

THES. What dost thou? Whither doth thy rage transport thee?

HERC. From whence I came, to death's dark realms I go.

THES. This is the language of a vulgar spirit.

HERC. Thou, from misfortunes free, canst counsel me.

THES. Doth the much suff'ring Hercules say this?

HERC. He had not suffer'd thus, had ills a mean.

THES. The brave protector, the kind friend of men.

HERC. They nought avail me: Juno triumphs here.

THES. Greece will not suffer thee to die thus rashly.

HERC. Now hear me, whilst my arguments refute

All thy monitions: I will prove to thee

That neither now, nor in times past, I ought

To form a wish for life. My sire was one,

Who having slain my mother's aged father,

With the pollution of that blood upon him,

Wedded Alcmena; and my birth from her

I draw: when the foundations of a race

Are not well laid, all that arises thence

Must be unfortunate. Then Jove, whoe'er

That Jove may be, begot me, with the hate

Of Juno ever hostile. Thee, old man,

Let not my words displease; for thee I deem,

Instead of Jove, my father. Whilst I yet

Hung on the breast, two hideous serpents, sent

By Juno to destroy me, roll'd their spires

Within my cradle. When my age advanc'd

To youth's fresh bloom, why should I say what toils

I then sustain'd? What lions, what dire forms

Of triple Typhons, or what giants, what

Of monstrous banded in the Centaurs' war,

Did I not quell? The Hydra, ray'd around

With heads still sprouting from the sword, I slew.

These, and a thousand other toils endured,

To the dark regions of the dead I went,

To drag the triple-headed dog to light,

That guards the gate of Pluto, the command

Of stern Eurystheus. This last bloody deed,

Wretch that I am, the murder of my sons

Have I achiev'd, to crown my house with ills.

I am reduced to this unhappiness,

At my loved Thebes I cannot dwell, for here
 What temple, what assembly of my friends
 Can I approach? Pollutions rank as mine
 Allow no converse. Should I go to Argos,
 How, since I fly my country? Should I seek
 Refuge in other states, malignant eyes
 Would scowl on me when known, and bitter tongues
 Goad me with these reproaches, Is not this
 The son of Jove, who slew his sons and wife?
 Then bid me thence with curses on my head.
 And to the man, whose former days were pass'd
 In happier fortune, mournful is the change:
 But him, that in distresses hath been train'd,
 Nought grieves, as though he were allied to ills.
 And to this misery shall I come, I ween.
 The earth will cry aloud, forbidding me
 To touch her soil; to pass its waves, the sea,
 And every fountain whence the rivers flow.
 Thus like Ixion's, on the whirling wheel
 In chains, will be my state: and this were best,
 That never Grecian might behold me more,
 With whom in better days I have been happy.
 Why therefore should I live? What blessing were it
 To gain an useless and unhallow'd life?
 Let the proud wife of Jove in triumph dance,
 And shake the pavement of th' Olympian house:
 Her will she hath accomplish'd: she hath rent
 From his firm base the noblest man of Greece.
 To such a goddess who would pay his vows,
 That for a woman, jealous of the bed
 Of Jove, hath crush'd the innocent, whose deeds
 Were glorious, and benevolent to Greece!

THES. This ruin from none other god proceeds
 Than from the wife of Jove. Well thou perceivest
 To counsel others is an easier task,
 Than to bear ills: yet none of mortal men
 Escape unhurt by fortune, nor the gods,
 Unless the stories of the bards be false.

Have they not form'd connubial ties, to which
 No law assents? Have they not gall'd with chains
 Their fathers through ambition? Yet they hold
 Their mansions on Olympus, and their wrongs
 With patience bear. What wilt thou say, if thou,
 A mortal born, too proudly shou'dst contend
 'Gainst adverse fortune, but not so the gods?
 Retire from Thebes, so wills the law; with me
 Go to the tow'rs of Pallas: there thine hands -
 From this pollution will I cleanse, and give thee
 A mansion, and no small share of my wealth:
 What presents from my country I receiv'd,
 For that I saved their death-devoted youth,
 And slew the Cretan Bull, these shall be thine:
 Through all the land to me are hallow'd fields
 Allotted; these, whilst yet thou art alive,
 Men from thy name shall call; and when thou diest,
 With solemn rites and stately monuments
 Honour'd by all th' Athenian state thy shade
 To Pluto shall descend; this crown adorns
 My country, that her bounties grace the good,
 Glorious through Greece: from me this recompense,
 Because thou gavest me to behold this light,
 Shalt thou receive; now thou hast need of friends,
 Not wanted when the gods vouchsafe to grant
 Their honour, grace sufficient where it flows.

HERC. Ah me! all this is foreign to my ills.
 I deem not of the gods, as having form'd
 Connubial ties to which no law assents,
 Nor as oppress'd with chains: disgraceful this
 I hold, nor ever will believe that one
 Lords it o'er others: of no foreign aid
 The god, who is indeed a god, hath need:
 These are the wretched fables of the bards.
 I have bethought me, though oppress'd with griefs,
 Not to incur the brand of cowardice
 By quitting life: whoc'er sustains not ills,
 Will not sustain th' attack of human arms.

No: I will rise superior to my fate,
And go to Athens; for thy bounteous gifts
Receive my thanks. A thousand rugged toils
Have I essay'd, nor ever shrunk from them,
Nor dropp'd a tear: and never did I think
That I should come to this, and pour my griefs
Thus from my melting eyes: but I must bow,
A slave, it seems, to fortune: be it so.
Thou seest my flight, old man; thou seest my hands
Stain'd with my children's blood: do thou attend
Their obsequies; entomb them, honour them
With tears, my presence since the law forbids;
Recline them on their mother's breast, and give
This sad communion to her arms, which I
Unhappily destroy'd, not willingly:
When thou hast placed their bodies in the earth,
Dwell in this city; wretched though thou be,
Strengthen thy soul to bear my miseries.
Alas, my sons! the author of your life,
Your father, hath destroy'd you: nought of good
Enjoy you from the honours, which my arms
With toil acquir'd, the glory of your father,
That noblest of possessions. Thee, my wife,
I likewise have destroy'd, ill recompense
For thy connubial love, connubial faith,
And all thy long domestic vigilance:
For thee my sorrow's flow, and for my sons,
And for myself: how wretched are my deeds,
That rend me from my children and my wife!
Where your fond kisses now? the sad delight
Lives only in remembrance. Where my arms,
Mournful associates? Should I bear them still,
Or cast them from me? What shall I resolve?
If at my side they hang, will they not say,
With us thy wife, thy children didst thou kill,
Thou mad'st us murd'ers of thy sons? If yet
I grasp them in my hands, what shall I answer?
But if I quit my arms, with which great deeds

Renown'd through Greece I have achiev'd, expos'd
To every foe inglorious shall I fall.

They must not then be quitted, but be held
A mournful guard. In one thing must I ask,
Theseus, thy friendly aid : to Argos bear
With me, this dog of hell, lest if alone
I go, my sorrows for my sons o'erwhelm me.
Ye race of Cadmus, citizens of Thebes,
Be your locks shorn, together pour your tears,
Together to the tomb attend my sons,
Together in one word lament the dead,
And me ; one ruin on us all is fallen,
Crush'd by one cruel stroke of Juno's rage.

THES. Rise, wretched man, enough thy tears have flow'd.

HERC. I cannot ; torpid are my stiffen'd joints.

THES. Misfortunes cast the strongest to the ground.

HERC. Would I were stone, insensible of ills.

THES. Forbear : give me thine hand, I will assist thee.

HERC. Let not my touch defile thy robes with blood.

THES. Lose not a thought on that ; it moves not me.

HERC. Refit of my sons, thou art to me a son.

THES. Hang on my neck, and I will guide thy steps.

HERC. A friendly pair, but one a very wretch.

A friend like this, old man, we wish to have.

AMPH. Blest in her sons the land that gave him birth.

HERC. Yet turn me back that I may see my sons.

THES. Hath that dear sight a charm to give thee ease ?

HERC. I wish it, leaning on my father's breast.

AMPH. Lean here, my son : that wish is grateful to me.

THES. Thus hast thou no remembrance of thy toils ?

HERC. All I have borne of ills is less than this.

THES. Regard thy fame, shew not thyself unmann'd.

HERC. I at thy bidding live, but low my state.

THES. Where is the great, th' illustrious Hercules ?

HERC. Where thou wou'dst be, wast thou so press'd with ills.

THES. Low, very low indeed my spirit would sink.

HERC. Why say'st thou then I bend beneath my ills ?

THES. Now go.

HERC. Farewell, old man.

AMPH. And thou, my son,
Farewell.

HERC. Entomb my children, as I told thee.

AMPH. And me, my son, who shall entomb?

HERC. I will.

AMPH. When wilt thou come?

HERC. When to my sons these rites
Thou shalt have paid.

AMPH. But how?

HERC. I will conduct thee
From Thebes to Athens. But my ill-starr'd sons
Lay in the earth: for me, who on my house
Brought ruin, with dishonour to myself,
My shatter'd bark on Theseus shall attend.
Unwise is he, who wealth or pow'r prefers
To the rich treasure of a faithful friend.

CHOR. The noblest of our friends in ruin sunk,
Retire we to our homes, and weep our loss.

THE
HERACLIDÆ.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

IOLAUS

COPREUS

DEMOPHOON

MACARIA

ALCMENA

EURYSTHEUS

MESSENGERS

OFFICER

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN.

THE
HERACLIDÆ.

THE opening of this tragedy is much like that of the Suppliants. Iolaus is represented as having placed himself and the sons of Hercules at the altar before the temple of Jupiter at Marathon, whither he had led them for refuge from the violence of Eurystheus, who had driven them from Argos, and pursued them from state to state throughout all Greece: Alcmena and the daughters of Hercules are in the temple. The poet has here again an opportunity, which he never omitted, of doing honour to his country, as always ready to take arms in the cause of virtue, and to protect the injured. The glow of heroic virtue animates every part of this drama, and shines with the brightest lustre in Macaria. The character of Iolaus is not less generous: it is recorded of him, that just before the battle he poured this ardent prayer to the gods, Give me back the strength of my youth for this one day, then let me die: so much dearer to him was the protection of the children of Hercules, than the continuance of his own life: the poet has judiciously omitted the latter circumstance of the prayer, because the joy for so glorious a victory was not to be clouded by the death of this illustrious and venerable hero. This tragedy, considered in a political view, has the same tendency as the Suppliants, to shew the ingra-

titude of the Lacedemonians, who boasted of their descent from the Heraclidæ, and from the ancient oracles to animate the Athenians with presages of victory.

THE
HERACLIDÆ.

101. **L**ONG hath my thought been fix'd, that some are form'd
Benevolent to those allied to them:
But he, whose eager mind is hurried on
In the pursuit of riches, to the state
Is useless, and unpleasant to his friends,
But to himself most good. I learn not this
By argument, but knowledge of the world:
For I, through shame and reverence of the touch
Of consanguinity, though Quiet woo'd me
To rest at Argos, shared the various toils
Of Hercules, alone attending him
Whilst he was with us: and e'en now, since high
In heav'n hath been his seat, beneath my wings
I guard his children, and afford to them
That safety which I want myself; for first,
Soon as their father was from earth remov'd,
Eurystheus sought to kill us; but by flight
Have I escap'd him; to my country lost,
My life is saved; but we, poor wanderers, fly
Driv'n out from state to state; for this foul wrong
To all his former wrongs Eurystheus adds,
In whate'er land he hears we have obtain'd
A seat, he sends his heralds to demand us,
And drives us thence; of Argos makes high boast,
And his own puissant state, nor fails to urge
His friendship changed to strong hostility.

My weakness, and the tender youth of these
 No more protected by their father's might,
 Were seen, and we from every country chased,
 Which reverenc'd his superior pow'r. But I
 Fly with these flying children, share their wrongs,
 Their suff'rings share, disdaining to betray them,
 Lest I should hear this taunt, " See, since no more
 " These orphans have a father, Iolaus,
 " Forgetful of his consanguinity,
 " Protects them not." Through all the states of Greece
 Abandon'd outcasts, we at length are come
 To Marathon, and its associate realm,
 And suppliant at the altars of the gods
 Implore protection: in this land, they say,
 Two sons of Theseus share th' inheritance,
 Sprung from Pandion, and to these allied;
 Inducement strong to lead our steps this way
 Tow'rds the illustrious Athens. Two in years
 Greatly advanc'd are leaders of this flight:
 These are my charge; the daughters of her son
 Alcmena clasping in her arms protects
 Within the temple; for we reverence
 Their youth and virgin modesty, nor place them
 Before the altar, to the eyes of men
 Exposed. But Hyllus, and his brothers, now
 Of riper age, bear their researches wide,
 If haply they may find some citadel
 To give us refuge, if by force chased hence.—
 My sons, my sons, come to me, of my vests
 Take hold; I see him, he approaches us,
 The herald of Eurystheus; he pursues
 Where'er we wander, driv'n from every land.
 Would thou might'st perish, thou detested wretch,
 And he that sent thee, for the many ills
 That mouth has to their noble sire announc'd!

IOLAUS, COPREUS.

COP. What, dost thou think that thou art seated here

In safety, weening thou art fled, belike,
 To some confederate state? A fine device.
 Who will prefer thy weakness to the might,
 The puissance of Eurystheus? Get thee hence;
 Why cause this trouble? Rise, to Argos go,
 Where death, the sentence of the law, awaits thee.

IOI. No: since the altar of the god will guard me,
 And this free land in which we are arriv'd.

COP. Wilt thou constrain my hand to force thee hence?

IOI. Nor me, nor these shalt thou drag hence by force.

COP. That shalt thou see: thy prophecy deceives thee.

IOI. No, never whilst I live shall that be done.

COP. Away: without leave ask'd of thee, this hand
 Shall seize, and to Eurystheus bear them back,
 Deeming them his wherever they are found.

IOI. You, who derive your high-born ancestry
 From Athens, help: though supplicants of Jove,
 Guardian of right, we suffer violence;
 Our garlands are polluted, to your state
 Disgrace, and foul dishonour to the gods.

IOLAUS, COPREUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. What means this cry, which from the altar's base
 Proceeds? What deep distress doth it denounce?

IOI. Behold a man, worn out with years, thrown down,
 Unhappy me, and roll'd upon the ground.

CHOR. Unseemly fall! Who threw thee on the earth?

IOI. He, strangers, he, dishonouring your gods,
 Forcibly drags me from this hallow'd place.

CHOR. He! From what country art thou come, old man,
 To us, who dwell in these four social towns?
 Or from some distant land o'er the wide sea
 Arrive you here, leaving th' Eubœan strand?

IOI. I in no island, strangers, pass my life,
 But from Mycenæ to your land am come.

91. These four towns were CEnoe, Marathon, Probalinthus, and Tricorythus: they were consociated by Theseus, and called the Tetrapolis of Atticæ.

CHOR. And in Mycenæ by what name address'd ?

IOL. Hath not the name of Iolaus reach'd
Your ears, who by the side of Hercules
His dangers shared, to glory not unknown ?

CHOR. Of old thy fame hath reach'd us: but inform us,
Whose children these, that hang upon thy hand ?

IOL. These, strangers, are the sons of Hercules,
Suppliants to you, and to your state they come.

CHOR. And what occasions brought you hither ? tell us :
Wish you to hold free converse with our state ?

IOL. Not to be yielded up, not to be borne
To Argos, rent by violence from your gods.

COP. This will not satisfy thy lords, who claim
Dominion o'er thee, and have found thee here.

CHOR. The suppliants of the gods have a just claim
To reverence, stranger ; nor shou'dst thou, old man,
Quit by a boist'rous hand perforce these seats ;
For awful justice will not suffer it.

COP. These to Eurystheus send, for they are his,
And nought of force this boist'rous hand shall use.

CHOR. Profane and impious were it for the state
To slight a stranger's supplicating pray'r.

COP. But it were well from danger's rugged path
To keep the foot, by wiser counsels guided.

CHOR. These bold words to the monarch of the land
Shou'dst thou address, nor from the gods by force
Their suppliants rend, but reverence a free state.

COP. Who is the monarch of this land and town ?

CHOR. Demophoon, from the noble Theseus sprung.

COP. To him then boldly will I urge my claim,
With him contend ; with others it were vain.

CHOR. He comes with hasty step, and Acamas
His brother with him : these will hear thy claim.

DEMOPHOON, ACAMAS, IOLAUS, COPREUS, CHORUS.

DEM. Since, aged as thou art, thy foot hath reach'd
Before our fresher youth this shrine of Jove,

Say by what chance are these assembled here.

CHOR. These are the sons of Hercules, that sit
As suppliants, having hung the altar round
With garlands, as thou seest, and Iolaus
Faithful in all his dangers to their sire.

DEM. And what unhappy cause requir'd these cries?

CHOR. He there, by force attempting from this shrine
To drag them, rais'd this clamour, and threw down
The poor old man, that I for pity wept.

DEM. His vestments, and the floating of their folds
Are Grecian; but barbaric are his deeds.
'Tis thine to tell me, and without delay
To tell me, from what country art thou come.

COP. I am an Argive: so much for thy wish
To know from whence: but wherefore, and from whom
I come, thou shalt be told: Mycenæ's king,
Eurystheus, sent me hither to lead back
These; and I come, O stranger, having much
Of justice to declare, and do. Myself
An Argive, lead these Argives, having caught
The fugitives from my country, by its laws
Condemn'd to die. We, who compose the state,
Have in ourselves a right to execute
The sentence of the state: in many lands
To many altars have they fled, and we
Have urg'd the self-same plea; nor hath one dared
To draw their private ruin on himself.
But if, in thee aught of imprudent seen,
They hither came, and through despair would cast
Thee into danger, be their hopes obtain'd
Or not obtain'd, (for never could they hope
That thou alone, of all the states of Greece
To which they came, if reason ruled thy mind,
Shou'dst pity their distress, which no relief
Can reach,) reflect awhile, and weigh things well;
If to their country these thou shalt give back,
Permitting us to lead them hence, what gain
Wilt thou acquire? From us thou may'st receive

This high advantage, all the warlike force
 Of Argos, all the puissance of its king
 Associate to thy state : but if thine heart
 Melts at their tale with pity, then the spear
 Must do its bloody work ; for be assured
 This is a contest we shall never quit,
 Till arms decide it. Then what wilt thou say ?
 Reft of thy realms wilt thou support the war
 Against Tirynthian Argos ? What allies
 Dost thou protect ? and in what cause the dead,
 The slaughter'd wilt thou bury ? All thy state
 Will execrate thy name, for an old man,
 A sepulchre, a nothing, and these children,
 Shou'dst thou incur these dangers. Thou wilt say,
 All thou canst say, a better hope awaits thee :
 But future hope before the present force
 Must vanish. Ill 'gainst Argos would these fight
 In arms, should they arrive to manly age,
 If that thought gives thee courage ; and between
 Long is the interval, in which perchance
 Ruin may crush you. Be persuaded then ;
 Give nothing, but permit us to lead hence
 These, who are ours ; and make Mycenæ thine ;
 Nor, what is often done, do thou reject
 Friends of superior worth, when thou hast pow'r
 To choose, preferring those of small account.

DEM. Who can decide, or who be well inform'd,
 Till he hath learnt the pleas of each distinct ?

101. This in thy realms, O king, is granted me,
 To speak ; and on my part I shall be heard :
 Hence none will chase me, as from other lands.
 'Twixt him and us all commerce long hath ceas'd :
 For since in Argos we have now no more
 A share, cut off by that severe decree,
 But from our country fly, by what just right
 Can he as Argives seize us refug'd here,
 Whom from our country he drove out ? We now
 Are strangers. Or from all the coasts of Greece

Deem you it just that he be forc'd to fly
Who flies from Argos? Not from Athens: no:
They from their land, through fear of th' Argive force,
Will never chase the sons of Hercules.
Nor Trachis this, nor an Achæan town,
Whence with no justice, but with many a boast
Of Argos, such as thou hast vaunted here,
Thou from the altars of the gods hast driven
These suppliants: were it so, and should they heed
Thy words, then Athens were no longer free.
But nature form'd them of a nobler spirit;
I know them, they would die first; for disgrace
Is by good men esteem'd an irksome load,
That burdens life; enough for them—but praise
When overstrain'd offends; oft have I felt
Myself oppress'd, when prais'd beyond due bounds.
But this I wish to tell thee, what strong tie
Is on thee to save these, since of this land
Thou art the Chief: from Pelops Pittheus sprung,
From Pittheus Æthra, and of her was born
Theseus thy sire: their lineage let me now
Trace upwards; Hercules was son of Jove
And of Alcmena, Pelops was her sire.
Thus Hercules and Theseus were allied,
And from the same rich source the kindred blood
Flows in my veins, Demophoon, and theirs.
What, further than this consanguinity,
Binds thee to aid these children I will tell thee;
For let me boast that I with Theseus sail'd
For the rich belt, the cause of many deaths,
And bore their father's shield: from the dark caves
Of Pluto to the realms of light he brought

211. They had fled to Trachis, a city of Thessaly: Ceyx, who was then the king, was the friend of Hercules, but being intimidated by the threats of Eurystheus, he sent them to Athens.

225. Æthra, the mother of Theseus, was the daughter of Pittheus; Alcmena, the mother of Hercules, was the daughter of Lysidice sister to Pittheus; their parents were Pelops and Hippodamia. *Plutarch.*

Thy father; Greece bears witness to the deed,
 Through all her states; this in return they ask,
 Not to be yielded up, not to be rent
 By violence from your gods, and from your land
 Be outcasts: Shame to thee, and to the state
 An ill, that suppliants, wand'ers, to thy blood
 Allied, ah me, their wretched state! look on them,
 Look on them, should by force be dragg'd away.
 But I beseech thee, on thy hands I hang
 These garlands, shew them mercy, take them, guard them,
 Dishonour not the sons of Hercules;
 Be thou a kinsman to them, be a friend,
 A father, brother, lord; for every thing
 Is better than to fall beneath the Argives.

CHOR. I melt with pity as I hear their ills:

And now, O king, I see illustrious worth
 O'erpow'r'd by fortune: noble was their sire,
 Yet miseries unmerited oppress them,

DEM. Three causes, each of painful weight, constrain me
 Not to reject the strangers thou hast brought:
 From Jove, the greatest, at whose altar placed
 Thou seek'st protection for this youthful band.
 Next, consanguinity and gratitude
 Call loudly on me to repay to these
 Their father's kindness; shame too urges me,
 Which claims most serious and attentive heed;
 For should I by this stranger's violence
 Allow this shrine to be profaned, no more
 In a free land shall I be deem'd to dwell.
 These suppliants to the Argives I disdain,
 Whilst danger closes round them, to betray.
 Yet must I wish thou hadst been guided hither
 By happier fortune: but e'en now suppress
 Thy fear, that from this altar any force
 Shall rend thee and thy youthful charge away.
 Go thou to Argos, tell Eurystheus this,
 And add, if 'gainst these strangers he hath aught
 Of accusation, he may prosecute

His claim ; but never shalt thou drag them hence.

COP. Not if my pleaded reason shews it just ?

DEM. How just, to drag a suppliant hence by force ?

COP. Not to my shame, but to thy damage this.

DEM. Mine were the shame, hadst thou my leave to force them.

COP. Chase them hence thou, then will we seize on them.

DEM. Perverse, to deem thee wiser than the god.

COP. Hither the guilt-stain'd wretch, it seems, must fly.

DEM. To all a common refuge is the shrine.

COP. Far otherwise perchance will Argos deem.

DEM. Will Argos deem ? Am not I sovereign here ?

COP. But not to do us wrong, if thou art wise.

DEM. And wrong I you not to profane the gods ?

COP. I wish thee with the Argives not to war.

DEM. It is my wish : but these I will not yield.

COP. Then will I seize, and lead them as mine own.

DEM. Thou wilt not thus with ease revisit Argos.

COP. That to a speedy trial will I put.

DEM. Touch them, thou soon with tears shalt mourn th' offence.

COP. Strike not an Herald, by the gods I pray thee.

DEM. Then let the Herald learn to curb his pride.

CHOR. Go thou away. And thou, king, touch him not.

COP. I go ; for weak the conflict of one hand :

But soon will I return, and bring with me

In all its martial equipage the war

Of Argos ; for her thousands stand in arms

Grasping their shields, Eurystheus at their head,

Who at Alcathoe's nearest boundary waits

Expecting my return : when he shall hear

The wrong thou dost him, he will blaze in arms

Dreadful to thee, thy country, and its fruits.

In vain would Argos train her numerous youth

To arms, unless her vengeance burst on thee.

DEM. Go then, and ruin light upon thy head :

304. Alcathoe was a city in the province of Megaris situated on the extremity of Achaia, between Corinth and Athens. The poet stations Eurystheus and his army here, that his hasty advance into Attica, and the battle that ensues, might not offend too much against the decorum of the theatre with regard to time. *Barnes.*

Thy Argos fear I not, nor shalt thou lead
These hence, to my dishonour, by rude force.
This state, where I am sovereign, never owed
Subjection to the Argives, but is free.

CHOR. The time demands attention, e'er the host
Of Argos treads our borders; fierce their arms,
And now with threefold fierceness will they come.
Heralds are ever wont to aggravate
Each heighten'd circumstance; and canst thou tell
What to the kings he may report, what wrongs
He suffer'd, and what dangers threaten'd him,
Enlarg'd as if he scarce escaped with life?

IOCL. There is no greater glory to a child,
Than from a brave and virtuous sire to draw
His birth, by marriage to the good allied.
But him, who master'd by his loose desires
Weds 'mongst the base, I praise not; for he leaves,
To gratify his wanton appetite,
Dishonour to his children: in the hour
Of adverse fortune will the high-traced lineage
Of noble ancestry ensure protection;
Not so th' ignoble: to the lowest pitch
Of abject misery sunk, we here have found
Friends and relations, who, of all the states
Of spacious Greece, alone stood forth to aid us.
Come, children, give them your right hand; and you
Give yours; come forward, we are here amidst
Approv'd and faithful friends. If ever fate
Shall to our country open our return,
If e'er your father's house, your father's honours
Be yours, let these be always high esteem'd
As friends and guardians: never 'gainst this land
Advance the hostile spear, rememb'ring this,
And of all others hold this state most dear:
For that great realm, and the Pelagic people
In your defence they make their enemies;
Seeing you poor and outcasts, yet they scorn'd
To yield you up, or drive you from their land.

For me, alive and dead, whene'er I die,
Thy name to Theseus with the highest praise
Will I extol, and with these generous deeds
Delight his ear, that thou hast kindly given
Protection to the sons of Hercules.
Through Greece thy fame shall flourish, and preserve
Thy father's glory; from th' illustrious sprung,
Thyself not less illustrious: this renown
Is thine, by few acquir'd; for rare to find
'Mongst many one, who by ignoble deeds
Shames not the virtues of his ancestors.

CHOR. Always through every age this land hath given
Protection to th' afflicted, if their cause
Was just; and for its friends a thousand toils
Sustain'd, as now this war which threatens nigh.

DEM. Well hast thou said; and I confide, old man,
Such shalt thou find this land, and after times
This kindness will record. Behoves me now
To call a full assembly of the state,
And, how with numerous forces to receive
Mycenæ's force, appoint. First will I send
T' explore their march, that they assail me not
With inroad unawares: th' experienc'd chief
With expedition prompt repels the foe.
My seers convened then will I sacrifice.
Thou to my house, these children with thee, go,
And leave the shrine of Jove: though for awhile
I shall be absent, there are those, whose care
Will tend thee: go then to my house, old man.

10L. I will not quit the altar: here we sit
Suppliants, imploring to your state success.
Soon as with honour from this contest, king,
Thou shalt acquit thee, to thy house we go.
And we have gods associate with our arms
Nothing inferior to the gods of Argos:
Juno, th' imperial wife of Jove, 'mongst them
Presides, with us Minerva; and I deem it

Of import that our gods excel in pow'r;
For Pallas ne'er will brook to be subdued.

CHORUS.

STRO. Fierce and haughty is thy brow,
Stranger of the Argive land:
Not for that will others bow,
Crouching to thy threat'ning hand.
Never shall thy vaunts control
The brave and free-born soul:
Of this great and splendid state
Ne'er be that th' inglorious fate:
Son of Sthenelus, no more
Madly boast the Argive pow'r.

ANTIS. Wou'dst thou 'gainst another state,
Which in pow'r with Argos vies.
Fierce advance with hostile hate,
Stranger thou, our kings despise;
Suppliants at this hallow'd seat,
Who to my land retreat,
Seize, and from the altars lead,
Nor the name of justice plead?
Deeds like these will honour own
Where humanity is known.

EPOD. Peace to my soul is dear:
Yet, thou malignant monarch, hear,
If 'gainst this realm thou lead thy martial train,
Not so shalt thou thy wish obtain.
Canst thou alone the falchion wield?
Alone is thine the brass emplated shield?
But though thy soul delights in war,
Shake not thy spear at me, but far,
Far from this land refrain thy pride,
Where pleas'd the Graces in rich state reside.

IOLAUS, DEMOPHOON, CHORUS.

IOL. Why art thou come, my son, thy brow o'er cast

With anxious care? Aught new hast thou to tell
The foe respecting? Halt they, or advance?
Or what thy tidings? For the herald's words
Were not vain threats: their leader, well I know,
Is prosp'rous with the favour of the gods,
And against Athens with no little rage
Inflamed: but pride, that lifts its swelling thoughts
Beyond just height, Jove humbles with the dust.

DEM. The Argive host is come, and at their head
Their king, Eurystheus; I myself have seen him:
Th' experienc'd chief, who boasts his skill in war,
Views not the adverse troops with others' eyes.
As yet his marshall'd host he hath not led
Into our plains, but on an hill's steep brow
Surveys the ground, so my conjecture deems,
Where best to march his army, where t' encamp
With safety. On my part all is prepared
As it behoves; the city bright with arms,
The victims ready for the sacrifice,
Such as each god requires. The seers perform
Lustrations through the town, of pow'r t' avert
Th' assaulting foes, and to protect the state.
All, who explain the voice of oracles
Mystic or popular, responses old,
Presaging safety to this land, I drew
Together, I consulted: on some points
Widely their answers differ'd, but in one
Perspicuous was th' according voice of all,
Commanding me to sacrifice to Ceres
A virgin from a noble father sprung.
My zeal thou seest how prompt in your behalf;
Yet neither mine own daughter will I slay,
Nor any of my citizens constrain
Against his will; and none of his free choice
Harbours the cruel thought to cast away
His dearest children. Thou may'st see e'en now
The people, as their differing judgments lead,
In bands assembled: some account it just

To aid the supplicants, of folly some
 Accuse me: these to satisfy requires
 My utmost care, or civil discord soon
 Will kindle into war: consider this;
 How you may be protected, how this land
 Be safe, revolve, and that my citizens
 Accuse me not: for no barbaric sway,
 That lords it with a tyrant's pride, is mine;
 But justice, as it guides, upholds my pow'r.

CHOR. This state, though prompt and willing to assist
 The strangers, by the god is not permitted.

IOE. Alas, my sons, we seem like mariners,
 Who from a storm's impetuous rage had reach'd
 The port, and thence by the tempestuous winds
 Are driv'n again to sea; so from this land,
 Where we had gain'd the shore, and deem'd us safe,
 Are we driv'n back. Ah why, insidious hope,
 Why didst thou sooth my soul, then fly, and leave
 Thy favour not accomplish'd? This to him
 Must be forgiv'n, that he is not inclined
 To slay the children of his citizens.
 All here is goodness to us, and demands
 My warmest praise; but if it please the gods
 That I thus suffer, yet my grateful thanks
 Ne'er shalt thou lose. But, O my sons, for you
 I know not what t' emprise: Ah, whither bend
 Our steps? What god have not our garlands crown'd?
 Or to what land have we not fled for refuge?
 But we must die, we must be yielded up.
 For me, if I must die, I reckon not of it,
 But as my death would to mine enemies
 Be triumph: but for you, my sons, I weep,
 You move my pity, and that aged dame,
 Your father's mother. In thy length of life
 Wretched art thou, Alcmena: I too feel
 Like wretchedness, sustaining all my toils
 In vain. We must, ah me! we now must fall
 Into his hands that hates us, and beneath

His baseness die dishonour'd. Know'st thou yet
 How thou may'st yield us succour? For not all,
 Not all my hope that these may be preserv'd
 Is vanish'd: me, instead of these, O king,
 Give to the Argives; from thyself remove
 The danger; and let these be safe; my life
 I value not, I ought not, let it go:
 Me chiefly would Eurystheus wish to seize,
 And with indecent outrage load the man
 Who shared in arms the toils of Hercules;
 For frenzy whirls him: but the wise would wish,
 If he must have a foe, that foe were wise,
 Not of an untaught spirit; there perchance
 Mercy and temperate thought might much avail.

CHOR. Do not now blame the state: should we betray
 The stranger, great perhaps the present gain,
 But foul dishonour would await the deed.

DEM. Generous thy words, but to the circumstance
 Ill suited: not for thee the king in arms
 Advances to these realms, he wants not thee.
 What would Eurystheus by an old man's death
 Acquire? but these it is his wish to slay:
 The noble race that rises to its bloom,
 The youths, that bear their father's wrongs impress'd
 Deep in their hearts, are dreaded by their foes:
 All this behoves him much to guard against.
 If thou hast aught that better suits the times,
 Propose it: for the answers of the gods
 Distract my thoughts, and fill my soul with fears.

DEMOPHOON, IOLAUS, MACARIA, CHORUS.

MAC. Impute not boldness to me, that I come
 Before you, strangers; this my first request
 I urge: for silence and a chaste reserve
 Is woman's genuine praise, and to remain
 Quiet within the house. But I come forth,
 Hearing thy lamentations, Iolaus,
 Though charg'd with no commission; yet perhaps

- I may be useful: these my brothers claim
 My chief anxiety, yet what concerns
 Myself I wish to learn, to former ills
 If new afflictions added gnaw thy heart.
- 10L. The race of Hercules, thee chief, my child,
 I have not now with justice first to praise.
 I thought indeed that fortune on our house
 Now smiled, but backward are we roll'd again
 To all our former ills: for of the flock,
 Or herd, no victim doth the voice of fate
 Demand, but other sacrifice instead,
 A virgin from a noble father sprung,
 If to ourselves, if to this state we wish
 Aught happy: this recalls my anxious cares;
 For he declares that neither child of his,
 Nor of his people, will he sacrifice.
 He tells me too, not plainly, yet he tells me,
 But that we find some means to extricate
 Ourselves from this, we elsewhere must seek refuge,
 For that his wish is to preserve this land.
- MAC. Might we have hopes of safety on these terms?
- 10L. We might, and fair success in all beside.
- MAC. Tremble no more then at the hostile spear
 Of Argos: I am ready, e'er command
 Be giv'n, to die, and to present myself
 A willing victim. What could be our plea,
 If for our sakes this state should deign t' abide
 The greatest danger, and on others we
 Imposing toils, which well we might prevent,
 Should fly from death? No: since we should deserve
 Contempt, if suppliants at this hallow'd shrine
 We sit and wail, from such a father sprung
 As we are, and betray degenerate souls.
 Doth this become the noble? Or perchance
 I deem it more becoming, when this town,
 May that ne'er be, shall sink beneath the foe,
 To fall into their hands, and every ill,
 Though from a noble father sprung, endured,

E'en then to visit the dark realms below.
 Haply I might escape, and wander far
 An outcast from this land: should I not sink
 With shame to hear it said, Why come you hither
 Bearing your suppliant boughs, yourselves of life
 So fond? Hence from our land; the base shall find
 No shelter here. Nor, should these die, myself
 Preserv'd, of prosperous fortune could I form
 One cheerful hope, though many fondly led
 By such delusion have betray'd their friends:
 A poor forsaking virgin who would deign
 To take in marriage? Who would wish for sons
 From one so wretched? Better then to die,
 Than bear such undeserved miseries;
 One less illustrious this might more besem.
 Then lead me to the place where I must die,
 Crown me with garlands, when you please begin
 The fatal rites, and triumph o'er your foes.
 I have a soul, that unreluctantly
 Presents itself; and I proclaim aloud
 That for my brothers and myself I die.
 I am not fond of life, but think I gain
 An honourable prize, to die with glory.

CHOR. How shall I praise the virgin's generous speech,
 Who for her brothers willingly presents
 Herself to die? Can man find words t' express
 Sublimier thought, or dare a nobler deed?

IOE. My child, this shews that thou cou'dst draw thy birth
 From none but Hercules; a ray divine
 Of his bright spirit in thy bosom glows.
 I blush not at thy words, but at thy fate
 I grieve. Yet how this end may be attain'd
 With greater justice, have I to propose:
 Call we her sisters forth, and let her die,
 To save the race, whose lot it is to die:
 It is not just thou die, e'er the lot falls.
 MAC. By lot I will not die; for to such death
 No thanks are due, or glory: name it not.

If you accept me, if my offer'd life
Be grateful to you, willingly I give it
For these; but by constraint I will not die.

101. There is more honour in these words, my child,
Than in thy former, generous as they were.
On great design thou buildest great design,
And nobler speech on noble. Yet thy death
I nor advise, nor interdict. To die
Will be to rescue these from their distress.

MAC. Wisely dost thou advise: fear not to share
Pollution from me, freely shall I die.
But follow me, old man; for in thy hands
I wish to die: be present, and compose
My lifeless limbs wrapt decent in my vests.
Whate'er there is of terrible to die
A slaughter'd victim, boldly will I meet,
Since from a father sprung in whom I glory.

101. I never can be present at thy death.

MAC. Be this at least thy care then, let me breathe
My last in women's hands, and not in men's.

DEM. That, O unhappy virgin, will I make
My care: with every honour not to grace thee
To me were shameful; various causes urge,
Thy generous spirit, and the call of justice:
For never did I see of all thy sex
One that to pity had a juster claim.

Yet hast thou aught to these, aught to his age
To speak, come near, and utter thy last words.

MAC. Farewell, revered old man, farewell, and teach
These youths in all things to be wise, like thee,
Nought will avail them more: and let thy care
Watch o'er their safety, nor thyself expose
Too readily to death: we are thy children,
And nurtured by thy hand. Me thou beholdest
My marriageable prime for them to death
Devoting. You, my brothers, who are here,

May you be happy, yours be every blessing,
 Which to procure a victim I shall die.
 Reverence his age, reverence Alemena's age
 Within, my father's mother, and these strangers.
 If ever you have respite from your toils,
 If ever to your country you return
 Protected by the gods, remember this,
 Bury, as it becomes you, her that died
 To save you, this were honourably just;
 For my affection was not wanting to you,
 But for our race I died: for children this,
 This for the nuptial bed shall in exchange
 Be my rich treasure, if beneath the earth
 A sense of aught remains, or all below
 Be nothing: for if there the dead shall find
 The sufferings that embitter mortal life,
 Where may we hope for rest? for death is deem'd
 Lenient of ills a potent medicine.

IOL. O thou, whose nobleness of soul excels
 In generous virtue, more than all thy sex
 Whilst thou art living, more when thou art dead
 Shalt thou be honour'd by us. But farewell:
 I have an holy dread t' offend the queen,
 Daughter of Ceres, who demands thee now.—
 She's gone: chill horror runs through all my veins,
 And shakes my frame; grief sinks me to the earth:
 O take me, lay me on that hallow'd seat,
 And with these vestments cover me, my sons.
 In what is done my soul hath no delight,
 Yet were th' oracular mandate not obey'd,
 There were no life for you; a greater loss
 Had then been ours; yet this is piercing grief.

CHOR. The bliss of man the gods dispose,
 Nor is he born to constant woes;
 Nor the same house doth happiness
 Always delight to bless:
 Each mortal hath his different state
 Allotted him by fate;

One it hurls down from his exalted height,
 And cheers the wanderer in his hopeless flight:
 In vain its fix'd decree we wish to fly,
 Nor wisdom can its pow'r restrain;
 The rash attempt were vain.
 But do not thou above the gods aspire,
 Nor sunk in abject sorrow lie.
 Unhappy, but illustrious is the part
 Adopted by her generous heart:
 She for her brothers, for this country dies,
 And deathless glory is her meed.
 Virtue through toils delights to rise.
 Worthy her brothers was the deed,
 Worthy her noble sire.
 Do thou the virtuous in their death revere,
 Such reverence it is mine to bear.

IOLAUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

- MESS. Hail, youths: the aged Iolaus where,
 Where is Alcmena, absent from this seat?
 IOL. Such as I am, behold me present here.
 MESS. Why lying thus? Why cover'd is thy face?
 IOL. Griefs of my own oppress my sinking heart.
 MESS. Now upright raise thyself, now lift thy head.
 IOL. I am a poor old man, I have no strength.
 MESS. I come a messenger of welcome tidings.
 IOL. Who art thou? for I recollect thee not.
 MESS. The slave of Hyllus: look, dost thou not know me?
 IOL. And comes he, friend, to save us from these ills?
 MESS. He comes: and more, good fortune now is thine.
 IOL. Thou mother of the bravest son, come forth,
 Come forth, Alcmena, hear these welcome words:
 Long for the absent hath thy soul with grief
 Wasted away, in doubt of his return.

ALCMENA, IOLAUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

- ALC. Why dost thou call thus loud, that all the temple

Sounds to thy voice? Is this an herald come
 From Argos, who by force would drag thee hence?
 Weak is my pow'r; yet, stranger, be assur'd
 Thou never, whilst I live, shalt lead these hence,
 Or may I never more be deem'd his mother:
 But touch them with thine hand, and thou shalt know
 How hard it is to strive with two, though old.

IOL. Have comfort, tremble not; no herald this
 From Argos with an hostile mandate charg'd.

ALC. Why then that cry, the messenger of fear?

IOL. Nay, come thou from the temple, near us come.

ALC. I know not what this means. Who is this man?

IOL. He comes to tell thee thy son's son advances.

ALC. O for these welcome tidings be thou blest!
 But from what country doth he hither come?
 Where is he now? What accident detains him,
 That he too came not to delight my soul?

MESS. He marshals in their ranks the troops he brought.

ALC. May not my presence longer be allow'd?

IOL. It may: but now to question him is mine.

MESS. Of what hast thou a wish to be inform'd?

IOL. What number leads he of allies in arms?

MESS. Many: thus general only can I speak.

IOL. This to th' Athenian chiefs, I ween, is known.

MESS. It is; and on their left our troops are placed.

IOL. And are they now in form of battle rang'd?

MESS. They are; and from the ranks the victims led.

IOL. How distant from them is the Argive host?

MESS. So that their leader is distinctly seen.

IOL. What doing? marshalling the hostile ranks?

MESS. So we conjecture, for we heard him not.

But I must go: I would not that my lord
 By me deserted with the foe engage.

IOL. And with thee I: this is alike our care,
 Present t' assist our friends, as it behoves us.

MESS. Not so: that purpose were in thee unwise.

IOL. Not share this perilous battle with my friends!

MESS. The strength, which once was thine, is thine no more.

10L. What, is this arm too weak to pierce a shield?

MESS. Not so; but first it may be thine to fall.

10L. Of all the foes not one dares meet my eye.

MESS. 'Tis not the eye, but hand, which gives the wound.

10L. In numbers not unequal will I fight.

MESS. Little those aged limbs will shield thy friends.

10L. Withhold me not; I am resolv'd to act.

MESS. The will, but not the pow'r to act, is thine.

10L. No more: I will not stay unactive here.

MESS. How 'midst arm'd troops wilt thou appear unarm'd?

10L. Beneath this roof are arms, the spoils of war,
 These will I use, and fix them here again
 If I return with life, for from the dead
 The god will not demand them: go thou in,
 Take down those arms, and with thy utmost speed
 Bring me my martial dress: it is a shame
 Tamely to keep the house, that some should fight,
 And some through coward baseness keep aloof.

CHOR. Age hath not quell'd his spirit; that still breathes
 The fire of youth, but feeble are his limbs.
 Why this vain effort? it will hurt thyself,
 And little aid our state. It better suits
 Thy age to curb such daring thoughts, and quit
 Things which surpass thy pow'r: for never more
 Shalt thou regain the vigorous strength of youth.

ALC. What wou'dst thou do, distracted as thou art?
 Leave me, and my poor children desolate?

10L. To fight is man's: the care of these be thine.

ALC. But shou'dst thou perish, how shall I be saved?

10L. The sons of Hercules shall live, and guard thee.

ALC. But should their fortune, heav'n avert it, fail?

10L. These strangers, fear not, never will betray thee.

ALC. That hope supports me: I have none beside.

10L. And Jove, I am assured, regards thy toils.

ALC. Ah!—But from me word of reproach shall Jove
 Ne'er hear: if he be good to me, he knows.

MESS. Thou seest these arms, a military dress;
 Yet all thy speed to clothe thee in this mail

Were slow, so fast the battle hastes to join,
And Mars abhors the tardy combatant.

But if their weight be cumbrous, go unarm'd,
And in the ranks array thee; I will bear them.

101. Well hast thou said: thus ready in thine hand,
As thou hast brought them, bear them: place the spear
In my right hand, support my left, and lead me.

MESS. Must the arm'd warrior as a child be led?

101. Securely, for the omen, I would walk.

MESS. O hadst thou pow'r to act, as thou hast will!

101. Haste: I should grieve, if for the fight too late.

MESS. Thine is the slowness, yet I seem to halt.

101. Dost thou not see my foot, how quick it moves?

MESS. Advancing less, than seeming to advance.

101. Thou wilt not say this when thou seest me there.

MESS. Performing what? Yet hast thou my warm wish.

101. Transfixing through his plated shield some foe.

MESS. In time if we arrive, for that thy fear.

101. O my right hand, as I remember thee
In youthful vigour when with Hercules
Thou didst storm Sparta, such if thou wert now
My friend in battle, I alone would drive
Eurystheus to foul flight: t' await the spear
He is not brave: yet prosperous fortune claims,
How'er unjustly, the repute of valour,
And every knowledge to success is giv'n.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. O Earth, O Moon, that through the night
Rollest in solemn state thy light;
Thou Sun, whose world-enlivening ray
With golden splendor crowns the day;
Bring me th' important tidings; from your skies
Shout that this seat of kings may hear,
And Pallas, as she bends her raptured ear,
Roll the blue lustre of her eyes.
Prompt to protect this suppliant band,
In freedom's cause I greatly dare,

Dare to avenge this injured land,
Meet the rough storm, and stem the tide of war.

ANTIS. 1. Yet that inflamed with hostile hate
A city like Mycenæ great,
So glorious, so renown'd in arms,
Should shake my country with alarms,
How dreadful is the proud array of war !
But, O my country, through dismay
What shame shou'dst thou these supplicants betray,
And tremble at the Argive spear !
Jove to my arms allies his might,
I will not fear though hosts assail;
Jove justly aids me in the fight,
And never o'er the gods shall man prevail.

STRO. 2. Thee too, Minerva, queen rever'd,
Pleas'd here to fix thy reign,
For high thy hand these rampires rear'd,
And thine this rich domain,
Drive, from thy Athens distant far
O drive this tyrant's threat'ning war,
Which, with unrighteous rage on fire,
From Argos proudly sweeps along.
I merit not, oppress'd with wrong,
So for my virtue to expire.

ANTIS. 2. With grateful reverence at thy shrine
Just honours are decreed;
To thee we pay the rites divine,
To thee the victims bleed.
Nor, as the full months roll away,
Unhallow'd sinks thy festal day.
And on the mountain's windy height
With many a song the youths advance;
And many a virgin leads the dance,
Charming with raptured hymns the night.

856. The Acropolis, which is called Παλλὰδος ὄχθος. *Musgrave.*

857. This whole Antistrophe alludes to the greater Panathenæa; at which one of the games was a musical contest, where the songs were devoted to liberty: this shews the necessity of reading *ναῶν* instead of *ναῶν*, as Barnes proposes, v. 780.

MESSENGER, ALCMENA, CHORUS.

- MESS. Lady, I bring thee tidings, which shall greet
Thine ear in brief, and do the bearer grace.
Know we have conquer'd, and the trophies stand
Hung with the various arms stript from thy foes.
- ALC. Thou art indeed a friend, and this good day
Hath sent thee for thy tidings to be free.
One anxious care yet hast thou not remov'd,
Fear for their lives whom most I wish to live.
- MESS. They live, most glorious through the conquering host.
- ALC. And doth the aged Iolaus live?
- MESS. He lives, illustrious by the fav'ring gods.
- ALC. Achiev'd he in the battle deeds of fame?
- MESS. Chang'd from old age he stood a youth again.
- ALC. Thou speakest wonders: but I first would hear
The glorious contest of my friends in fight.
- MESS. All this I may relate to thee at once.
When front to front each adverse host in arms
Presented its array, from his high car
Whirl'd by four coursers in the space between
Hyllus advancing stood, and cried aloud,
O thou, who to this land hast led thy troops
From Argos, hear, Why spare we not this state,
Nor injure thy Mycenæ, of one man
Depriv'd? Advance, and with thy single spear
Oppose my single spear: if in the fight
I perish, take the sons of Hercules,
And lead them hence; but if thou fall, permit me
T' enjoy my father's honours, and his house.
The army with applause receiv'd his words,
As honour's dictates, both to end their toils,
And shew the noble daring of his soul:
Not so the Chief; he felt no generous shame
His host revering, nor through abject fear,

881. Si sententiam meam circa locum plane conclamatum proferre liceat, versum unum saltem, forsân etiam et plures, qui hunc proxime sequebantur, excidisse, hunc autem versum 805, ita olim fuisse scriptum existimo, *Ἡκκς, πρὸς τοὺς γαίαν οὐκ εὐσώμεν*; *Heath.*

Dared meet the foe's strong lance. Such though his soul,
So mean, so base, he came t' enslave the sons
Of Hercules. Then Hyllus to his ranks
Return'd. Forthwith the seers, this hope now lost
That spear to spear in single fight opposed
The contest might decide, perform'd the rites,
And from the victim pour'd th' atoning blood.
Their cars some mounted, some to guard their breasts
Grasp'd their strong shields: th' Athenian king with words
Breathing an hero's soul address'd his troops,
“ Now, fellow-citizens, now is the time
“ That calls you bravely each to guard this land,
“ Which gave you birth, which gives you sustenance.”
Nor less in th' adverse host did each, who wish'd
Not to disgrace or Argos or Mycenæ,
Inflame to valiant deeds his next in arms.
But when the Tuscan trumpet sounded high
The signal, and th' encount'ring armies rush'd
Each against each, how dreadful was the clash
Of shields'gainst shields! What groans, what shouts at once!
At first the fury of the Argive spear
Pierc'd our array, but soon it closed; and now
Foot fix'd to foot, and man with man engaged,
Firm we sustain'd their charge, and many fell.
On either part this voice of exhortation
Resounded, here, You that in Athens hold
Your happy mansions, there, Ye valiant sons
Of Argos, free your country from this shame.
Scarce with each vigorous effort, and much toil
Turn'd we at length the Argive host to flight.
And now the aged Iolaus saw
Hyllus rush on impetuous; his right hand
He stretch'd, and ardent wish'd to mount the car;
Then seiz'd the reins, and where Eurystheus fled
Urg'd the pursuit: what follow'd from report

899. The name of Macaria is not mentioned out of tenderness to Alemena.
Barnes.

Let others tell, but this mine eyes beheld.
Pallene's hallow'd height, the loved abode
Of Pallas, past, he saw Eurystheus whirl
His flying car, then breath'd his earnest vow
To Jove and Hebe, that for one short day
His youth might be restor'd, vig'rous to pour
His vengeance on the foe. Now shalt thou hear
Things wonderful. Above the yoke two stars
Were seen to stand, that with a cloudy veil
Cover'd the chariot, Hebe and thy son
The wisest deem them: from th' ethereal cloud
In all the vigour of his youthful arms
He came, and nigh the rocks of Sciron seiz'd
The chariot of Eurystheus; him in chains
Th' illustrious Iolaus bound, and comes
Leading his glorious prize, the Argive chief
Once great and prosperous; but his present state
To all proclaims aloud this solemn truth,
That the fair-seeming bliss of mortal man
Deserves not admiration, e'er we see
His death: so suddenly his fortunes change.

CHOR. O Jove, thou god of triumphs, now mine eyes
Behold this day of freedom void of fear.

ALC. At length, O Jove, hast thou beheld my ills,
And for thy goodness grateful is my soul.
Now, what before I thought not, well I know,
That my brave son commences with the gods.
And now, my children, now you shall be free
From all your toils, from this Eurystheus free,
On whom with infamy shall ruin burst.
Your father's city now shall you behold,
Resume your rich possessions, and present
Your hallow'd victims to your country's gods,
Chased from whose shrines in exile have ye pass'd,
Outcasts from land to land, a wretched life.
But what means this? Why doth Eurystheus live?
What wise intent doth Iolaus hide?
Why spare him? This to me appears unwise,

Not to take vengeance on the captive foe.

MESS. Respect to thee, that thou may'st see before thee
 This pow'rful tyrant now beneath thy hand
 Sunk in subjection. He reluctant comes,
 But in her iron chain Necessity
 Drags him along, unwilling in thy sight
 Alive to come, and suffer vengeance there.
 But hail, age-honour'd dame: remember me;
 What was thy word, when I began to tell
 These tidings; make me free; for, promise given,
 The great and noble nought becomes but truth.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Bid the sprightly choir advance,
 Welcome now the measured dance,
 If the shrill flute grace the feast;
 Venus too shall be a guest.
 Joy our glowing bosoms fires
 When our suff'ring friends we see,
 E'en where pensive hope retires,
 Free from toils, from dangers free.
 Various births from fortune spring,
 Hers the great events to bring,
 Since with Time she mix'd of yore,
 Offspring he of Saturn hoar.

ANTIS. 1. Yes, my country, boldly tread
 Paths which right to glory lead;
 Still to guard this praise be thine,
 To revere the pow'rs divine.
 He that, urg'd by impious pride,
 Dares to wander from this way,
 Drives with madness at his side,
 And destruction marks his prey.
 Awful warnings strike our eyes,
 Clear the signals of the skies,
 When with ruin thus oppress
 Sinks the tyrant's haughty crest.

STRO. 2. Now, age-honour'd dame, we know,

And with holy reverence bow,
 Favour'd in their bright abodes
 Sits thy son among the gods.
 Now he soars above the fame
 That on Cæta's fatal height
 Him consumed that dreadful flame,
 Him receiv'd the realms of night.
 In the golden seats above
 Blest is he with Hebe's love:
 Two of Jove's immortal race,
 Hymen, hast thou deign'd to grace.
 With events events conspire:
 Guardian of their godlike sire
 In the fight th' Athenian maid
 Rush'd to yield the hero aid.
 Guardian of the hero's race
 Now her loved Athenian state
 Dares their hapless cause embrace,
 Shields them from impending fate,
 And, his lawless pow'r defied,
 Checks th' oppressor's cruel pride.
 Me may no ambition fire
 With insatiate wild desire!

ANTIS. 2.

OFFICER, EURYSTHEUS, ALCMENA, CHORUS.

OFF. Lady, thou seest before thee what in charge
 I have to tell thee; hither am I come
 Leading Eurystheus, unexpected sight
 To thee, and unexpected fate to him.
 Not such his boast, to fall into thy hands,
 When from Mycenæ's rampired walls he march'd
 Clos'd round with shields, and breathing thoughts elate
 Beyond his fortune, to lay Athens waste.
 Far other doom the god assign'd, and taught him
 In this reverse of fate far humbler thoughts.
 Hyllus and the illustrious Iolaus
 To Jove have rais'd the glorious trophy high.
 To me they gave in charge to lead him to thee

To glad thy soul; for this is joy supreme,
To see a vaunting foe in ruin sunk.

ALC. Thou most detested, art thou come? At length
Hath justice caught thee? This way turn thy head,
And dare to look the injured in the face.
We now are lords o'er thee; not thou o'er us.
And art thou he, for much I wish to know,
That dared, thou close-designing coward, load
My son with every insult, whilst alive,
Wherever now he be? For with what insults
Didst thou not dare to load him? To the realms
Of Pluto didst thou send him while he lived;
And send him with thy mandate to destroy
Hydras and lions: all the other ills
Devised by thee in silence shall I pass,
For they were long to tell: nor did it sate
Thy malice to dare this; but from all Greece
Me and his children hast thou chased, though seated
Suppliant before the shrines, nor my hoar hairs
Respected, nor their youth: but thou hast found
Men here, and a free state that fear'd thee not.
Now with dishonour must thou die, and pay
For all thy deeds; yet for such numerous wrongs
To die but once is scanty recompense.

CHOR. This must not be: thou may'st not give him death.

ALC. Our arms have made him captive then in vain.
But say, what law forbids that he should die?

CHOR. The rulers of this land approve it not.

ALC. Seems it not just to them to slay a foe.

CHOR. Not him, whom in the fight they take alive.

ALC. To such a rule hath Hyllus giv'n assent?

CHOR. He ought, I ween, not to oppose this state.

ALC. He ought not live, nor longer view the light.

CHOR. Ill was it judg'd at first, that then he died not.

ALC. Is it dishonour to take vengeance now?

CHOR. Now there is no one that should give him death.

ALC. I will: and some one I may be esteem'd.

CHOR. So doing, heavy blame wilt thou incur.

- ALC. I love this state, it must not be denied;
 Yet since my foe is fallen into my hands.
 Not all the world shall save him. Call me bold,
 And daring far beyond what woman ought
 To dare, yet shall this deed be done by me.
- CHOR. Thy anger, lady, well I know, flames high
 Against this man, and not without just cause.
- EUR. Be thou assured I shall not sue to thee
 With flattering words, nor for my life make plea
 Of aught that argues base and abject fear,
 This only, Not by choice did I engage
 In this contention, from the same high race
 With thee descended, and by blood allied
 To Hercules thy son: howe'er my will
 Inclined, th' imperial Juno, heav'n's high queen,
 Inflamed me with this fever of the soul.
 His hatred once incurr'd, when I was bent
 T' achieve this contest, many were the toils
 I plann'd, and many an anxious night I pass'd
 Devising various means how most t' offend,
 How to destroy my foes, that I might live
 Thenceforth from fear exempted; for I knew
 Not of the vulgar was thy son, but proved
 A man indeed; this, though mine enemy,
 Be his just praise, for noble were his deeds.
 He now no more, behov'd me not, by these
 Hated, and conscious that they harbour'd thoughts
 Glowing with all their father's enmity,
 To leave nought unattempted, but to kill,
 To banish, to emprise, that acting thus
 My life might be secure? And wou'dst, not thou,
 Were thine my state, with vengeance at thy heels
 Chase the stern lion's anger-chafed whelps?
 Or wou'dst thou tamely suffer them to dwell
 At Argos? This were not to be believ'd.

1087. Sthenelus, the father of Eurystheus, was the son of Perseus: Electryon, the father of Alcmena, was the grandson of Perseus. *Brodaeus.*

But since, when in the fight I rush'd on death,
 They slew me not, now by the laws of Greece
 Unhallow'd is the hand that sheds my blood.
 Th' Athenian state hath spared me, temp'ring war
 With mercy, and the god respecting more
 Than vengeance for my hostile inroad. This
 In answer to thy words: hence I appeal
 To Jove, th' avenger of the suppliant.
 To die is not my wish: yet I can quit
 Without dismay the golden light of life.

CHOR. Let my words have some little weight, Alcmena;
 Spare him, since this is pleasing to the state.

ALC. What if he die, and we the state obey?

CHOR. That would be best: but how may this be done?

ALC. That I shall shew with ease: him will I slay,
 And give him dead to his entreating friends.
 I envy not his body to the earth;
 What is to vengeance due, his death shall pay.

EUR. Kill me, of thee no mercy I implore.
 But to this state, for that with reverence touch'd
 It spared my life, an ancient oracle
 Of Phœbus will I give, in after-times
 Of higher import than what now appears.
 My body you will bury, where the fates
 Ordain, before Pallene's hallow'd shrine,
 Seat of the virgin goddess: there to * thee
 Benevolent, and to this state benign,
 Beneath your earth for ever will I lie:
 But to † their sons most hostile, when in arms,
 Basely forgetful of this benefit,
 Hither they lead their troops; such are the guests
 You have protected. These responses known,
 Haply you marvel I against you march'd,
 Of the god's voice regardless: I esteem'd
 Juno more potent far than the replies
 Of oracles, and never to betray me.

* The Chorus.

† The Heraclidæ.

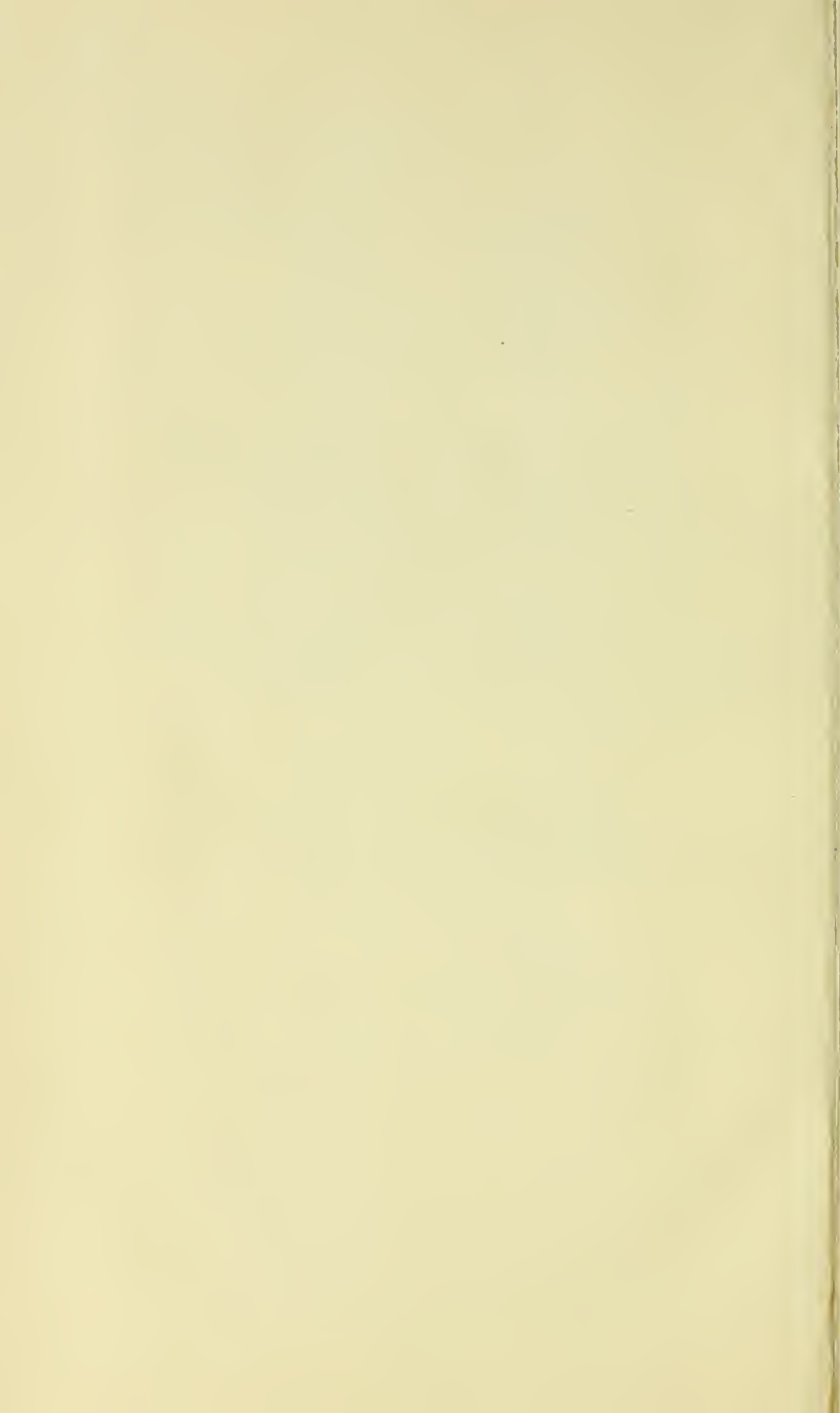
But on my tomb be no libations pour'd,
No blood; for unappeas'd my shade shall give them
Mournful return: a double benefit
From me shall you receive; for in my death
Your welfare and their ruin will I work.

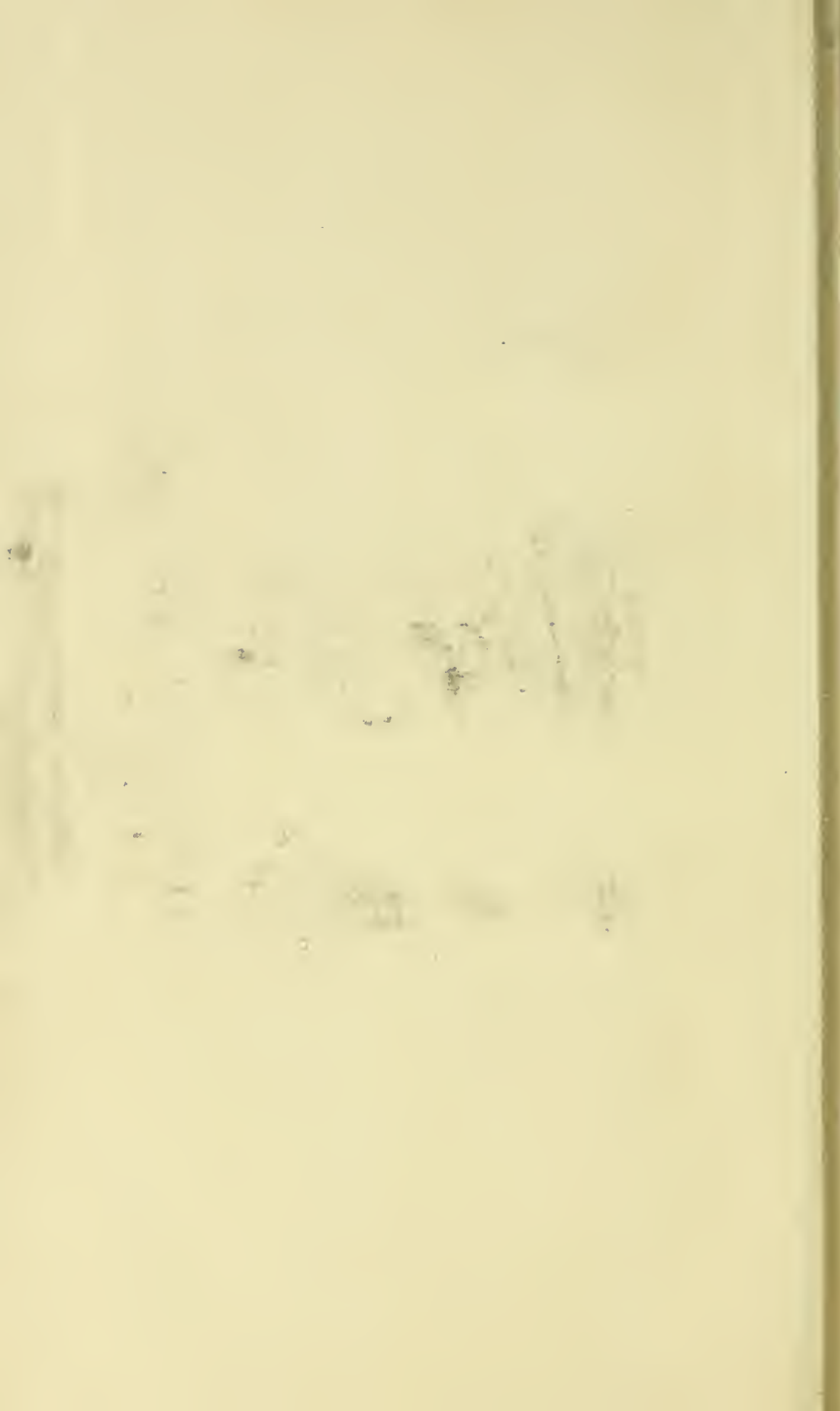
ALC. Why, hearing this, if he is doom'd to work
Welfare to you and your posterity,
Why then delay to kill him? For he points
The way to safety: true, he is a foe,
But will, when dead, be friendly. Bear him hence,
You that attend me: after you have slain him,
You ought to cast him to the dogs: nor sooth
Thy soul with this fond hope, that thou shalt live
To drive me from my native land again.

CHOR. Me too this pleases: ye attendants, go.
From this our country and our kings are clear.

1158. This is not to be understood as a command, but as expressive of her indignation for his presuming to relate an oracle unfriendly to the posterity of Hercules.

END OF VOL. I.





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